LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

CALL FOR VIEWS ON THE NON-DOMESTIC RATES (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM JIM BROWN

I am writing to you as a concerned parent with a son at an independent school. My son has regular bouts of illness which unfortunately have caused him to miss school. After numerous discussions with my local primary school I had to give up and move my son to an independent school. The local school admitted that they simply could not cope with providing an individualised learning plan with their class sizes. The next steps would be to apply to special needs to get added support. Although this was a possibility, I was told it would take up to two years during which my son would continue to fall further behind. In an independent school he has been able to follow normal classes and have individual learning plan to cope with any absences and is excelling. He has gone from the bottom of most classes to one of the top performing pupils. I am not an enormously wealthy person, but I have one child and I chose to make the financial sacrifice. If the school fees were increased significantly, they might get to the point where I and many others would not be able to afford to send our children. If this were to happen the school system could not cope and any benefit from extra rates would be more than wiped out by extra provision for school pupils. I am told that it would only take one pupil in 30 to put authorities at a financial disadvantage. I would expect the number of people leaving independent school system to be much higher than this figure as many ordinary people are just affording it at the moment.

The school my son attends makes a huge contribution to the local community. Playing fields and other facilities are regularly used by other schools and community groups. Not to mention the many children who are supported with bursary places. I am sure if the school has to suddenly find £200,000 per annum then they will be looking to cut these types of activities.

At the company I work for we have many international transfers. As people may come to Edinburgh for a few years then they chose to send their children to independent schools which offer English exam system. Any increased cost would be directly transferred to the company and make Edinburgh a much less attractive location. With the impending exit from the European Union the last thing we need is to make our international companies less attractive.