LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM CAERA INNES

The Barclay Review intends to impose the removal of charity relief from most independent schools from 2020 as part of the non-domestic rates reform. From reviewing this report and the recommendations made and considered by both the Scottish Government and the Social Research Association, I have many queries which lead me to question the intent of the Review. Also led me to question whether Ken Barclay fully thought through the implications of Sections 10 and 15, of the review, and how it will affect real people as well as having a knock-on effect on the economy.

Firstly, I aim to make a point through clear evidence:

- Overall, 4.1 per cent of children in Scotland attends one of 72 independent schools in membership of the Scottish Council of Independent Schools.¹
- Edinburgh needs an extra 47 secondary school classrooms by 2020/21 as pupil numbers climb by 7.5 per cent.²
- Across Scotland, 453 additional classrooms – equivalent to 13 new secondary schools – will be required to cope with the growing population, the report by procurement specialists Scape Group estimate.
- City council projections show more than half the Capital’s secondary schools will be over capacity by 2022.
- It is found that “The loss of 1 in 30 pupils from the independent sector – either to the state sector or boarding pupils locating elsewhere – would cost the Scottish taxpayer more than the entire rates increase proposed by the Bill.”³ However, this is not mentioned at all in the Financial Memorandum.

For context, I am a 5th year student at an independent school, the head of my family is a single mother who works 3 jobs to be able to afford for myself and my 2 other siblings to go to independent schools. I put it to the Scottish Government and Ken Barclay whether they even thought to consider those on the cusp of being able to afford the high prices that Private schools demand. By increasing each of my siblings’ fees, my mother is having to find £250 per annum per child. I ask the Scottish Government where they expect my single mother to find an extra £750.

Furthermore, the Scottish Government seem not to have factored in that if 1 in 30 independently educated children leave their schools, they will have to transfer to their

² https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/education/revealed-half-of-edinburgh-s-high-schools-will-be-full-in-three-years-1-4905426
³ scis-briefing-document.pdf
local institution. Undoubtedly public schools are acclaimed, however with budgets so tight and classrooms fit to burst, I wonder whether it was considered in the Barclay report that an influx of independent school pupils will tip public schools over the edge into deterioration. An increase in pupil population will put the pressure on council schools and therefore resulting in a lower calibre of learning, hence widening the attainment gap. As private schools become more elite and public schools are put under greater strain, the vast gap widens. This is the complete opposite of the Scottish Government’s policies: “This Government was elected to close the attainment gap and rise the bar for all”4. However, as I see it, the Scottish Government are not following through with this promise. By making Independent schools less accessible to the middle class, they are lowering the bar and opening the attainment gap. I ask the Scottish Government whether they see fit to make amendments to the Barclay Review to actually fulfil their manifesto promises.

Additionally, it appears that of the 24,000 Scottish registered bodies covered by charity relief, 56 schools are being singled out by this Review. What I wonder is why only independent schools are being picked upon for this non-domestic rate reform when “many of the twenty-four thousand charities in Scotland are fee-charging, including professional colleges, further and higher education institutions, and private care homes.”

Hence, if my family were to transfer to public schools, there is the argument to say that my mother would work less due to a lesser demand to keep us out of debt. As she is a GP working in deprived areas, I argue that it is your NHS system which would feel a decrease in staffing for the most vulnerable areas. We are not a stand-alone case. Overworking parents would relax their efforts to keep their family’s heads above by water if they went to public schools and staffing levels across Scotland would feel the implications.

Therefore, I ask the Scottish Government whether they will take this into account on their amendments of this Barclay Review and consider the impacts on this will have on the Scottish economy.

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