LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM ANONYMOUS

I am a concerned parent of a daughter at St George’s School for Girls and twin sons at ESMS, both private schools in Edinburgh.

I have followed the debate around the charitable status and business rates relief for private schools with great interest and have noted the concerns raised by both the schools and parents about this potential change.

Whilst I appreciate the rationale of the government in proposing this change, the impact on the families and in particular the schools should not be underestimated.

From the perspective of parents, there are a large number of families that make great sacrifices in prioritising the education of their children and a significant increase in school fees (in particular when added to the impact caused by the recently-announced increase in teachers’ salaries and pension contributions) will almost certainly cause large numbers of these families to have to reduce their general level of monthly spending even further and/or withdraw their children from the schools. The cost of education is already very high and many parents just can’t afford to support the cost of the increases that have been mentioned, resulting in them having to reconsider their children’s ongoing attendance at these schools.

The impact on the schools, however, is expected to be much greater. Several of these excellent schools have a very difficult time balancing the level of school fees with investment in the schools, payment of teachers and being able to offer places to children that otherwise would not be able to afford it, and a loss of a small number of families may start a downward spiral (i.e. higher fees -- > loss of pupils -- > less income -- > less investment in teachers and facilities -- > further loss of pupils -- > less income -- > etc) that may well impact the world-class all-round education that these institutions have been able to provide for so long (and that are a real asset to the city of Edinburgh, its reputation and competitive position amongst other leading cities) and may ultimately impact the sustainability of some of these schools. This is particularly true of smaller private schools (like St Georges) where the impact is likely to be felt more quickly and more severely, such that we are very concerned about our daughter’s future there.

We do hope that the LGCC and the FCC will reconsider this matter very carefully as there really is a lot at stake with regards to this matter.