LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
CALL FOR VIEWS ON THE NON-DOMESTIC RATES (SCOTLAND) BILL
SUBMISSION FROM ANONYMOUS

We have 3 children who all started school in the local authority maintained school. Over the 8 years since our first child commenced school the budget was cut by 70%. As a consequence of this there were significant cuts made to the school curriculum. Music has now gone from the school. The learning support hours have been cut. Reading books are no longer provided to take home for reading homework. The school cannot afford to send their pupils to intercollegiate sporting events. They have reduced specialist PE teaching.

Our third child was diagnosed with dyslexia with a reading age significantly below his chronological age. Unfortunately the school were not able to provide learning support because of limited resources and their need to prioritise children with greater need. He did not receive the support that would have helped with his difficulties and after 1 year he was falling significantly below his peers and was below average in the standardised testing. We felt we had no option but to move him to school where he could get individual learning support and support within class lessons.

We have made a choice to both work full time in order to afford this and at the same time paying taxes to help sustain the local authority schools. I understand that if a proportion of children were removed from the independent schools as a consequence of increased fees as a result of loss of rates relief the cost to the local authority would be greater than any income received from rates. There would be increased numbers of children in classes at a time when the current government promise to reduce class sizes has not been delivered. There would be reduced access to learning support for children with additional learning needs.

Currently there are bursaries for those who cannot afford the cost of independent education ranging from 10-100% of fees. There would likely be less money available to fund bursaries if rate relief was removed and it may jeopardise some current students on bursaries. Currently many of the facilities in independent schools can be accessed for use by the general public eg. swimming pools, sports halls, music halls, shared extracurricular events. It is likely that access will be reduced or the cost of accessing the facilities would increase in price in line with commercial rent.

There is great disparity in the charities which have and have not been threatened with removal of charitable status such as private nurseries, specialist schools eg. music school, private colleges, further education facilities etc. There seems to be lack of good argument to support a loss of rate relief only on independent schools.
out of all the different 24,000 charities/institutions that currently receive rate relief. I would suggest that these proposals have been made from some political ideology rather than pragmatic, logical assessment.

I find it difficult to see who benefits from this decision. There will be greater cost to local authority from increased children in already overcrowded schools, less availability to extra support for those who require it, less access to affordable facilities for the wider community. Reduced opportunity for bursaries and therefore access to the independent schools for those on lower incomes.

I hope that there will be thorough and detailed evaluation of the financial impact of the Bill prior to a decision to ensure that the decision does not cause an overall negative impact to all parties concerned.