LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM ANONYMOUS

As a family who have made a very difficult decision and long term financial commitment to send our children to an independent school, this proposal would be a major blow for us. We are not from generations of independent school family members, in fact our children are the first and the fees are funded by my wife and me working extremely hard and having to make compromises in our everyday life in order to pay these school fees. We are not in the so called “elite” that are the target of this tax which appears to be the reason for this proposed change – the elite are in fact a myth with the majority of families we know having both parents working to fund fees (also adding to the tax income for the country).

On a wider, less personal note, any decision to remove charitable status from independent schools does not stand up to financial scrutiny and is merely an attempt to advance an ideological view that independent schools advance inequality – this is simply not the case and we in fact regularly contribute to an access fund which supports all children to access this education which may not previously have been an option to them. In an ideal world independent schools would not be required but we do not live in an ideal world and parents that do chose to send their children to be educated independently should not be financially punished for doing so.

If fees were to rise, even nominally, it could be enough to push some families into making the difficult decision to remove their children from independent schools – as I mentioned in my opening statement, we are one of those families who would have to reconsider our current school arrangements. This financial pressure would hit all families (we have 2 children), but also those of 3 or more children, would feel this impact even more. We know that state schools are over-subscribed. Can Edinburgh City Council confirm that they would be able to place significant amounts of children coming from the independent sector – we would need a space in P3 and P1 at Cramond or Davidson Mains which is our catchment area?

Looking at the figures - it costs local government around £6,500 per annum to educate one pupil. In an independent school which might have to pay an additional £500,000 in non-domestic rates it would only take the 78 pupils to move into the state sector to cancel out any “supposed” financial advantage to local government – this is before new buildings and facilities to support overcrowding are factored in. That could be as little as 30 families moving to the state sector and is not, in anyway, inconceivable if they are facing three or four sets of fee increases or like my family where we both work to fund the 2 sets of fees.
More children moving into the state sector will, in real terms, cost the local government considerably more than would be generated by removing charitable status. In reality we know that the amount generated will be nowhere near enough to cover the additional costs so standards and facilities will fall for all.

In addition, if independent schools were to lose their charitable status then they would not be subject to the vigorous oversight that they currently enjoy nor would they be under any obligation to make facilities available to the local community or provide bursaries, everyone would lose out.

The proposal is quite short sighted and I would strongly urge that the current charitable status remains.