LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM ANONYMOUS

I am writing to you as a parent of three who attend Cargilfield Preparatory School in Edinburgh. I have read in detail the supporting documents to this proposed bill and the actions taken by various committees over the last decade or so and I am thoroughly dishearten to find you have chosen to continue down the route of removing the rate relief for Independent Schools in Scotland despite the recommendation from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, which has carried out a thorough review of Independent Schools. The OSCR specifically notes

On disbenefit, we noted that there were arguments current in society that:

- the existence of an independent school has a negative impact on state schools in the same area;
- that independent schools have a divisive influence in society.

We could not find any strong evidence to support these views in the context of the charity test, which requires us to look at any disbenefit resulting from the activities of the charity itself.

I suggest that you take the advice of your regulating body and desist from amending the non-domestic rates (Scotland) Bill. With regards to the school where our children are the regulatory body noted that it provides bursary support, sibling discounts, scholarships: as a family with 3 children all born within 3 years of each other this sibling discount has been particularly helpful. One risk with this bill is that it will see more families moving into state provided education which is already bursting at the seams and struggling to provide for the students within the state system; which we also support through our taxes. Cargilfield also provides a wide range of opportunities for the local community, specifically Crammond Primary (who hold their sports day at the school, among other events) but also reaches out to the wider Scottish Schools Community by holding days such as Wind Instrument / Orchestral days. If this recommendation is brought forward into law then there will be an additional cost of £100,00 that Cargilfield alone which they will need to manage. As a parent I imagine a significant portion of this will be through increased fees, decreasing bursaries and scholarships and charging for the use of their facilities rather than providing them as part of a charitable status plan. All of which would undo the hard work instigated and supported over the last decade across all the Independent Schools in Scotland.

Please also consider for those parents who chose to no longer support a private school and who send their children to state schools they will then have more income available to spend on other things which I can assure you would not be via charitable giving to the local economy like these private schools currently are through their fees. The money would most likely go towards foreign holidays, buying consumer products not made or sourced locally and certainly not investing to the degree that the schools currently are, in the local economy. Put this together with the increase in
employer contributions to the STPS, 33% increase from 1 September 2019 there is likely to be a significant change in where people spend their money, choose to live and send their children to school: all to the detriment of Scotland’s local economies. I urge you to consider the impact on the current state schools: an influx of pupils whose parents can no longer pay for the independent schools, a decrease in the additional activities and support provided by the independent schools. It is unclear whether, given the proposed bill to charge rates, independent schools will continue to be viewed as charities, surely this needs to be addressed before passing this bill?

I urge you to consider again all the beneficial work the Independent Schools in Scotland do and ensure this bill is not passed into law.