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

Comments on section 10.

I write as a mother of 2 children at private school. Both my husband and I work full time and make many sacrifices to cover the cost of school fees. This is our choice; the central location of the school and extensive wrap around care enable us to make our childcare fit in with our busy work schedules. Obviously, we pay their fees over and above the money we pay in tax which goes towards education in Scotland (effectively meaning that we are contributing towards a local education we are not using and is therefore able to be used for the benefit of other children). In addition, each year we contribute to (at the school’s urging) a fund to enable the school to offer funding to children whose families would otherwise not be able to cover the cost of fees. The school facilities that our fees help to maintain are also used for the benefit of the community, for example the sports grounds which are used by many clubs after hours and at weekends for children’s’ activities.

Were section 10 to be passed, the impact would be huge. The strong likelihood is that fees would drastically increase to the extent that families like us may not be able to continue to fund our children’s education at a private school. Our local primary school is, however, oversubscribed. As the statistics show, there is a high percentage of children who attend private school in Edinburgh. Would Edinburgh City Council be able to accommodate an influx of children from the private sector into already overburdened local schools? What extra income does the Government think would be generated by section 10 and how does this compare with the cost of implementing this and resulting costs of children leaving the private sector? What about the impact on class sizes, local school buildings and the cost and number of teachers required? The statistics are that the loss of 1 in 30 pupils from the independent sector (a real possibility if fees are to increase as a result of section 10) would cost the Scottish taxpayer more than the entire rates increase proposed by the Bill. As such, section 10 would result in an additional cost to the tax payer as well as put increasing demands on local schools, to the detriment of the children and teachers who are already there. Another result of section 10 would be that scholarships and other such funding would in all likelihood cease as schools cut costs where they can to keep fees down. Again, this would result in more children leaving the private sector to attend local schools. Has this been considered and costed?

What about the facilities, such as sports grounds, that private schools make available to the communities they are in- has the impact of these being withdrawn or charged at commercial rates been considered? How would this meet the Government’s desire to cut inactivity?
At present, the cost of houses in good school catchment areas is inflated. Has the Government considered the impact its proposal could have on this? With families taking their children out of the private sector surely the problem of inflated house prices would increase as parents pay whatever house prices are required to get into a good catchment area? This would effectively price many families out of the market, meaning that some families are able to buy a good education at their local school whilst others are unable to do so.

Has the Government considered the impact on private school staff were pupil numbers to fall? Currently, the independent sector employs 5.9% of Scotland’s teaching workforce and more than 3,000 support staff. Surely, many of these roles would be cut as a result of section 10; has this been considered?

Why is the Government singling out private schools? Other organisations with charitable status charge fees and are not being impacted, so why are private schools the focus?