LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM ANONYMOUS

It is of huge concern that there are no explicit considerations of the impact of this Bill on the state sector provision of education, local communities or the families of children at independent schools who will be impacted.

Removal of non-domestic rates in relation to independent schools will inevitably result in some children being removed from their existing educational environments, causing distress and harm. For some, already established in their schools, this will be no less than an adverse childhood event or ACE, which the Scottish government is so keen to tackle and prevent. A Bill which promotes disruption to existing education and which will prevent others from accessing opportunities is illogical and contradictory.

Any child displaced from the independent sector will require State education. This Bill will not provide funding to provide the school places for these children. It will cost more to provide for displaced children than the Bill would generate.

In addition, since independent schools can take from any catchment area, families from areas with lower housing costs are able to send their children to these schools. They do not form the artificially inflated housing market which forms itself around so-called ‘good schools’. Families in these broader catchment areas still pay into the State education system and, if forced to remove their children from the independent sector, will not be paying additional into State education but will be trapped in lower value housing markets and their children will be disadvantaged educationally as a consequence of the actions of Scottish Government.

At present, Independent Schools offer many means-tested places, to maximise opportunities for those who apply. However, this Bill would reduce the ability of Schools to offer such places since their resources would be needed elsewhere. Additionally, the facilities that have been paid for over the years by parents who can currently afford the fees, and which are used for local communities and groups outwith the school at reduced rates or for free, could no longer be provided.

Accepting this Bill would therefore force Independent Schools to become ‘elitist’ in the sense that only the wealthiest could then afford the increased fees. The vast numbers of pupils who come from varied backgrounds and whose families make many sacrifices to fund their education but are not wealthy, and those who are able to attend because of financial support provided by the Schools themselves would be the ones losing out.
This Bill does not provide long term vision or look holistically at what the Independent Sector Schools provide and what would be needed to deliver the equivalent in the State Sector, nor does it consider the day to day impact on families all over Scotland. Rather than promoting equity, it would facilitate the status quo for the wealthiest, with the middle and lowest being disadvantaged, without any good rationale for doing so and costing more than it would generate in the process.