LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM ANONYMOUS

I write to register protest at the proposed removal of charitable relief from non-domestic rates for mainstream independent schools.

I write from the perspective of a governor of an independent Scottish prep school and also as a parent of children attending an independent senior school in Scotland.

As a member of a governing body I am acutely aware of independent schools’ commitments to meeting their welfare, educational and charitable obligations. I am also acutely aware of the financial constraints on which independent schools operate. A rates increase of such proportion will have significant implications on schools’ budgets. Schools will inevitably be forced into a combination of:

1. Containing costs. This will impact service provision, staff employment (one of the greatest costs for a school), discretionary spend on wider community collaboration and benefits, spend with local suppliers / trades and, most significantly, narrow access to private education with the number of families supported with bursaries (above statutory minimum).

2. Increasing fees. I am concerned this will only serve to further restrict access to private education to the most wealthy in society. At a time of economic uncertainty it is a matter of fact some families will no longer be able to afford private education. An increase in rates will only compound this.

From experience, a significant proportion of families that “stretch” to afford private education have often turn to it when either their children or local school are under performing, or when their children require additional specialist support e.g. for dyslexia, above a level of provision typically available in many state schools. Whilst we should strive to make state provision the best it can be, we should not implement legislation that as a consequence (unintended or intended) “prices out” working families that turn to private education for a variety of personal reasons.

I am also concerned the Barclay report recommendations do not treat independent schools in Scotland with parity to other charities, some of which also charge fees.

In summary the removal of charitable status on non-domestic rates for independent schools will:

- Financially challenge the sector.
- Force schools to contain costs, potentially impacting the number of teachers or back office / support staff employed, contributing tax to the economy.
- Have a knock on adverse economic impact to the economy of a school’s extended supply chain.
• Adversely impact scope for the charitable activities and wider community benefits independent schools provide; I am proud of the work my own school achieves. We should aim to expand rather than curtail charity and wider community collaboration.

• Result in some children returning to the state sector (4.1% of Scottish children currently attend independent schools), incurring additional state sector costs. (Analysts predict it is likely these additional costs will outweigh the business rates tax received if just one in thirty pupils leaves private education in Scotland.)

• Disenfranchise working families, by reducing access to private education for those struggling to afford it or receiving bursaries.

I trust this letter presents a compelling case for the status of fifty six independent schools not to be changed, as proposed in Section 10 of the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill.