PE1539/P

Scottish Tenants Organisation Email of 11 May 2015

Re Scottish Petition PE 01539

To the Petitions Committee, Scottish Parliament in support of an on going petition so that Housing Association tenants can exercise their right to request information from their landlords under Freedom of Information legislation.

<u>A Right deferred, should NOW be conferred; that is, housing association tenants in Scotland should be able to request information from their landlord under the Freedom of Information Act</u>

Dear Convener,

Housing Associations are currently exempt from the FOI despite being defined as Public Bodies under European Law. The more names of tenants and supporters will be adding their names to this or similar letters in the near future as part of an on-going campaign.

Concomitant with freedom of speech, freedom of information is a prerequisite to democracy. It is a fundamental right. It does not require 'evidence' that tenants at any particular moment want it, and it cannot be repudiated. Housing association tenants' right to request and receive information under Freedom of Information is a right postponed and it is high time that is was legally bestowed. Freedom of speech without the right to know is freedom denied.

Human rights is also about supporting those who are vulnerable and power poor despite being more numerous than the PR spin astute social landlords who hold sway over their (Tenants') lives so as to encourage their compliant unquestioning silence.

Many countries have freedom of information legislations applying to information held by government bodies. In some, this also applies to private bodies. Housing associations receive public funds and provide a public function. Access to information is increasingly recognised as essential for transparency and accountability of democratic governance, as facilitating citizens' ability to make informed/educated choices, and as safeguarding citizens against mismanagement and corruption.

Yours sincerely

Iain Mac Innes
Convener
Scottish Tenants Organisation