



**SCOTT COPPOLA**  
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Mr. J McConnell  
First Minister  
Scottish Executive

RECEIVED

09 SEP 2004

FM'S OFFICE

8 September 2004

13 SEP '04 10:03

Dear Sir,

### SMOKING IN PUBLIC PLACES AND ROAD TOLLS

I feel so strongly on these issues that I feel impelled to write to you. This is the first time ever I have written to a public servant. Please take time to read this and reflect.

Over the years our liberties have been taken away from us one by one, at the behest of politicians, allegedly "for our own good". In common with the silent majority, I have taken this on the chin, although those minority groups which shout loudest seem to be listened to and get their own way.

Firstly, smoking in public places. I would like to advise you of my intentions should you implement a ban on smoking in public places in Scotland. Firstly, I will dispose of this business which has 50 employees, like myself, all paying taxes. (In addition of course the business also pays national and local taxes.) I will then leave this country and move to a country where freedom of choice is allowed. Death and taxes are inevitable but people's freedom of choice must be maintained.

You recently visited Ireland and reached your own conclusions, based on what certain people with a vested interest showed you. It would appear that there is no room in your view for freedom of choice in this matter. It must be obvious that choice is what the ordinary member of the public wants.

If a person opens a bar or restaurant and makes it a smoking or non-smoking venue, that is his or her choice. If they then get no business they will have to change the business strategy or close. That is basic economics and how all business should be run in order to generate profit (and a tax take).

It beggars belief that the Government is making it nigh on impossible for a person to smoke in civilised surroundings on the one hand, and yet on the other is taking in billions of £'s in tax from the self same activity. If it feels so strongly about this surely the principled stance would be to ban smoking totally. At least this would be a consistent point of view.



Director: D.J. Coppola, (Managing) Registered in Scotland No. 79442

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In fact, to take things to a logical conclusion, why not close other businesses on the grounds that the product is bad for you; e.g. fish and chip shops as these cause heart disease, bars as alcohol is responsible for illnesses and crime, or petrol stations as vehicles are responsible for road deaths and global warming. Perhaps we should all just stay indoors at home to be on the safe side, although this would mean no jobs or taxes to pay for public services.

I can assure you that I know of several other business leaders who feel as I do that this is a step too far. I urge you to think carefully before any decision is made to curtail peoples liberties in this way as there will be an unprecedented backlash against the Executive if a smoking ban is implemented.

Turning to Road Tolls, it appears that the Council wish to implement these in Edinburgh. This could be the straw that breaks the back of many small businesses in Edinburgh. We already pay hefty charges for services which were formerly covered by our Rates bill, e.g. rubbish collection and water and waste disposal. This further burden will undoubtedly cause businesses to go bankrupt, and empty the city centre of the customers which are its lifeblood. The end result will be to turn what should be a thriving city into a ghost town.

As I stated at the beginning, I have never written such a letter in the past. I have always complied with the law and will continue to do so, but I will use whatever media outlets and resources are available to me to campaign against these proposed measures. If it is announced that these proposals are to go ahead I will send a copy of this letter to all local and national newspapers and personally finance a campaign against the proposals, uniting opposition from all quarters, especially those who will see their livelihoods under threat.

You must try to understand the depth of feeling in the business community and the community as a whole regarding a further erosion of our liberties and a stealth tax by another name.

I would appreciate the courtesy of an acknowledgement of this letter.

Yours faithfully



for SCOTT COPPOLA ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTORS LTD

Dennis J Coppola  
Managing Director