

PE1508/H

Petitioner Letter of 5 May 2014

**COLLECTIVE RESPONSE TO WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS ABOUT PUBLIC
PETITION 01508 REGARDING COMMONWEALTH GAMES SPONSORSHIP**

I have petitioned the Scottish Parliament to call on the Organising Committee to get ATOS withdrawn as a sponsor for the Commonwealth Games. I believe that the written submissions given by organisations to this petition justifies taking this petition forward.

The STUC submission is a powerful indictment of the greed of ATOS in their collaboration with the Westminster Coalition Government's punishment of the poor in return for profit. The STUC submission stated correctly: "ATOS were fundamentally, ethically and morally wrong to enter into these Government contracts when the key driver was not to assess an individual's capacity to participate in the modern labour market but to justify withdrawing benefits from many sick and vulnerable people in order to achieve a 20% reduction in disability benefits."

Six hundred thousand sick, dying and disabled people were taken off these benefits, leaving them with little or no income to live on, forcing many to seek out food banks. (The above figure of 600,000 is derived from the number of people who lost their benefits and appealed that loss and is therefore an underestimate, since not everyone appealed said loss of benefit.)

The STUC goes on to say that "ATOS Healthcare is a trading name and the wholly-owned subsidiary of the parent company ATOS IT Services Ltd and, as we would suggest, the parent company was presumably fully aware of the implications of their continued participation in these assessments, a process that ultimately caused severe distress to some of the most vulnerable people in the United Kingdom." The above quote shows clearly that there can be no separation between ATOS Healthcare and ATOS IT Services Ltd.

Their submission concludes "The STUC has expressed our concern over the continued involvement of ATOS in Glasgow 2014 and would welcome any moves to raise this matter with the Organising Committee."

The STUC submission shows clearly that they want ATOS removed as a sponsor for the 2014 Commonwealth Games because of the hundreds of thousands of sick, dying and disabled people being removed from their Social Security benefits. This was emphasised at the vote at the STUC Conference in 2013, voting for the removal of ATOS as a Commonwealth Games sponsor.

The submission by Scottish Disability Sport is very disturbing and illuminating in that they make clear that anecdotal evidence from staff, volunteers and key partners is that disabled athletes and players have been affected by the outcome of Work Capability Assessments administered by ATOS in that these disabled people are not able to afford to participate in their chosen sports, thereby contradicting the whole ethos and legacy of the Commonwealth Games about encouraging people to take

part in sport, leading to a healthier lifestyle. SDS itself further questioned the standards used to choose suitable sponsors for the Commonwealth Games. This submission further underlines why it is important for this Petition to go forward, in that the Scottish Parliament should call on the Organising Committee to withdraw ATOS as a sponsor for the Commonwealth Games. (We have reliable information that 4 athletes chosen to represent Scotland will be protesting during the Commonwealth Games about ATOS being a sponsor unless the Organising Committee withdraws ATOS as a sponsor or, if this is too late, an apology for allowing ATOS to become a sponsor.)

The submission by the Department of Work and Pensions is very alarming, in that they gave a computer link which detailed a report on the number of people who died in 2011 when being assessed for benefits. (This is the most recent report to give such statistics.) More people have died since then. 2,200 people died in 2011 when undergoing Work Capability Assessments by ATOS, as this whole process is very stressful for sick, dying and disabled people who have physical and/or mental illnesses and therefore many of these deaths can be attributed to people being terminally ill, going through a horrendous process, and those who committed suicide, fearing that their benefits would be taken away. No-one should have to go through this process, and for ATOS to profit from the misery created is an aberration to civilised values.

The further fact that ATOS then, through their Work Capability Assessments, informed the decisions of DWP to place dying people in the work-related activity grouping. 1,300 died while in this grouping. This is further anathema to any civilised values that we hold dear in Scotland. Again, this evidence calls on the moral courage of our politicians in the Scottish Parliament to demand from the Organising Committee that ATOS stands down as a sponsor for the Commonwealth Games.

ATOS, in their submission, pass on the blame, stating that they do not make the final decisions regarding taking away benefits from the sick, dying and disabled. This is to miss the point. ATOS conduct the Work Capability Assessment in the full knowledge that the Assessment is designed as part of the decision-making process to force sick, dying and disabled people off the small Social Security benefits that they receive. ATOS are part of the decision-making apparatus to take away people's benefits. They only care to make profits off the backs of the poor.

The views of Glasgow 2014 Ltd. are appalling, in that they fail completely to address any of the issues raised in the Petition. Similarly, Sports Scotland also fail to address any of the issues raised in the Petition, as though sponsors have no moral responsibility to account for their actions.

Finally, the Scottish Government are in real danger of washing their hands of what ATOS has done, in that they state, in their submission, that the ATOS sponsorship agreement with the Organising Committee has nothing to do with its activities on behalf of the Department of Work and Pensions. Again, this misses the whole point. ATOS is the same organisation that has profited from the ruination of the lives of our poorest and most vulnerable people and will now act as a sponsor, getting full access to an audience of 1.2 billion people to further enrich themselves. This is a moral crime of the first order. The Scottish Government has a duty to oversee that

ethical values are seen by the people of the Commonwealth to operate, and that is not what is currently happening.

In conclusion, I can say honestly that the facts presented in some of the submissions warrant that this Petition be allowed to proceed in that the Scottish Parliament call on the Organising Committee for the 2014 Commonwealth Games to remove ATOS as a sponsor, so that civilised values prevail over the corruption of money.

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Petitioner