

SNP challenged to keep manifesto commitment on tax

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12 Dec 2017



The Scottish Conservatives will use their party business in the Scottish Parliament tomorrow (Wednesday) to challenge the SNP to stick to their own manifesto promise on tax.

The motion calls 'on the Scottish Government to freeze the Basic Rate of Income Tax throughout the Parliament to protect those on low and middle incomes'.

The SNP manifesto promised that the SNP 'will freeze the Basic Rate of Income Tax throughout the next Parliament to protect those on low and middle incomes'.

A recent Survation poll for the Sunday Post highlighted that, asked what the Scottish Government should do first, 61% say the SNP should review public spending, only 22% say they should raise tax.

The Federation of Small Businesses, Scottish Chambers of Commerce, the Scottish Retail Consortium and the Fraser of Allander Institute have all warned the Scottish Government against raising taxes due to the negative effects on the economy.

In particular, the Fraser of Allander Institute has stated that Scotland's economic performance is so bad that the SNP would not be able to raise the money to fund any significant increase in public sector spending.

Murdo Fraser, Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Finance said:

"The SNP told people one thing when it wanted their votes, now it's saying the complete opposite.

"The Deputy First Minister has previously called tax rises as a 'punishment' and said it would be the 'last thing' the SNP government would do.

"The Scottish Conservatives believe that hitting hardworking families with higher taxes will only damage the Scottish economy in the long run, leading to less money to fund public services.

"There is now a serious consensus within Scotland's business community that the SNP should not increase income tax, including even the pro-independence,

SNP supporting Business For Scotland.

“Indeed, the latest analysis suggests that these potential tax rises will not raise the required amount of money for public services, only punish taxpayers.

“In addition the public also overwhelmingly think that the SNP should review public spending prior to any tax increases.

“The SNP must focus on growth and productivity; on revitalising the Scottish economy.

“Bluntly, the SNP must stick to their manifesto and not raise punishing and counter-productive taxes.”

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- Sturgeon should reveal tax-hike views of her own economic group

11 Dec 2017



Nicola Sturgeon should reveal the views of her own Council of Economic Advisers in relation to planned tax hikes, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

The nationalists are understood to be planning an increase in income tax as part of this week’s budget, forcing tens of thousands to pay more than they would if they were living elsewhere in the UK.

At the weekend, a range of high-profile organisations – including FSB Scotland and Reform Scotland – said the move would be a huge mistake, adding to host of other who have already made their feelings clear.

Even the pro-independence Business for Scotland said it was against whacking up tax.

Now shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser has demanded the Scottish Government reveals what its own Council of Economic Advisers thinks of the planned changes.

The council had been asked previously by the SNP to investigate the behavioural impact of increasing the upper rate of income tax.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“Presumably Nicola Sturgeon has consulted her Council of Economic Advisers on one of the biggest financial decisions of the SNP’s time in government.

“If so, she should set out exactly what this group has said before Thursday’s budget.

“Almost every business group in Scotland – even the pro-SNP ones – have said they oppose income tax rises.

“They say it would be bad for business and bad for the economy.

“The SNP is increasingly isolated on this matter, which is why the views of the Council of Economic Advisers are so critical.

“If it wasn’t created for decisions like this, people will wonder why it was established at all.”

[Scottish Government must cut the waste not raise taxes](#)

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- Scottish Government must cut the waste not raise taxes

10 Dec 2017



More than £100 million of taxpayers’ money has been “chucked in the bin” under the SNP Government, the Scottish Conservatives can reveal today.

It comes as the party begins a new campaign today to “cut the waste” ahead of this week’s Scottish Budget.

Nicola Sturgeon is preparing to use that budget to increase taxes on hard working Scots, claiming she needs the money to pay for the SNP’s spending plans.

The Scottish Conservatives will instead argue this week that Ministers should avoid tax increases by promoting greater efficiency in the public sector and getting better value for money.

Analysis of the Scottish Government’s accounts over the last decade reveals evidence of endemic waste and inefficiency.

Losses totalling £112m were found in the Scottish Government Consolidated Accounts for each of the last ten years as well as Freedom of Information Requests. Individual losses over £250,000 have to be detailed individually.

Some individual examples of these losses include:

- £32,000 lost over the last 3 years by civil servants losing mobile phones and computers
- £2.4m lost after the Scottish Government gave a grant to a firm that promptly went bust
- £440,000 lost in the Prison Service after an IT system was dumped due to 'technical difficulties'

Scottish Conservative shadow cabinet secretary for finance Murdo Fraser said:

"Instead of raising our taxes, the SNP needs to get its own house in order.

"These figures show that, under the SNP, more than £100 million of taxpayers' money has been simply been chucked in the bin.

"The Nationalists have the money to keep taxes down, but thanks to mismanagement and waste, they now want taxpayers to cough up.

"Ultimately, driving up taxes will damage Scotland's economy, cutting the funds that pay for schools and hospitals.

"There is still time for Derek MacKay to see sense. The SNP promised not to increase the basic rate of income tax. He must honour that pledge this week, or risk losing all credibility.

"Scotland should not be the highest taxed part of the UK. Instead, the SNP should cut the waste and deliver better value for taxpayers."

[Police chief had £53k tax bill settled from public purse](#)

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- Police chief had £53k tax bill settled from public purse

8 Dec 2017



A senior police officer had their personal tax bill worth £53,000 settled by the tax payer, an Audit Scotland report has revealed.

The same deputy chief constable – who isn't named – also received £49,000 in relocation expenses.

Neither payment was properly disclosed by the Scottish Police Authority, which has been severely criticised in today's report.

The SPA was also criticised for appointing three temporary senior members of staff at a cost of £344,000.

The report stated that, even if the SPA does eventually achieve financial balance in 2020/21 as it predicts, it "may then move back into a position of annual deficits due to unaddressed recurring cost pressures".

It's the latest crisis to beset policing in Scotland, after a raft of suspensions and resignations of senior staff over the past year.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

"This report could lead some to think the SPA has been behaving like some kind of dodgy offshore tax haven.

"People will be astonished that senior police officers are having their tax liabilities settled by the tax payer.

"And they'll be incredulous that none of this was properly declared.

"One of the driving forces behind setting up a single force was to improve transparency and accountability.

"Instead, things seem murkier than ever.

"At a time when the public's trust in the management of Police Scotland has been so severely tested, this will only make things significantly worse.

"In a debate just this week I demanded that the SNP government gets a handle on this situation but the call was rejected.

"It must act before the relationship is damaged beyond repair."

[Ruth welcomes Brexit deal progress](#)

8 Dec 2017



Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson has welcomed a breakthrough in negotiations between Britain and the EU on the Brexit deal.

She said the announcement was "a real step forward", and that the agreement

“ensures the integrity of the UK”.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“This morning’s announcement is a real step forward.

“It confirms the rights of EU citizens living here will be protected, as well as those of Brits living abroad.

“It guarantees there will be no hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. These are both hugely welcome steps and I congratulate the Prime Minister on securing them.

“Throughout this process, my overriding priority has been to ensure we act as one United Kingdom and no home nation is left behind.

“I am therefore glad that this morning’s agreement ensures the integrity of the UK.

“The work on a comprehensive trade agreement with the EU27 can now begin.

“This will require more hard work and patience. But I am optimistic that Britain and Europe can together build a new relationship, underpinned by the ties of trade, shared values and mutual interest.

“It is in all our interests.”