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- The SNP is putting its own interests before the national interest

13 Jun 2018



The Scottish Conservatives have today called on the SNP to “get off the ceiling and get back round the table” following the passage of the EU Withdrawal Bill through the Commons this week.

It comes with the Nationalists threatening to walk away entirely from UK wide discussions on Brexit, according to reports today.

Such a move would be deeply damaging for jobs and the economy in Scotland – and run counter to previous promises by SNP Ministers to support crucial new UK wide frameworks in key areas of the economy post-Brexit.

The Scottish Conservatives are demanding that the SNP confirm today they do not intend to withdraw from vital forums such as the Joint Ministerial Committees which help to deliver key projects such as City Deals.

The Withdrawal Bill will ensure that more powers are devolved to the Holyrood Parliament following Brexit next year.

Meanwhile, both the UK and Scottish Governments have previously agreed that, once we have left the EU, new UK wide “frameworks” will be required to replace EU rules to ensure that the UK internal market continues to operate freely and without friction.

Scottish Conservative constitution spokesman Adam Tomkins said:

“The hysterical reaction from the SNP following the passage of the Withdrawal Bill was entirely predictable.”

“But it is now time for them all to come off the ceiling and get back round the table.”

“There are crucial issues to discuss in short order. SNP Ministers have themselves agreed we need to design long-term UK wide frameworks in key areas to support jobs and the economy in Scotland. We need to get these discussions up and running as soon as possible.”

“The UK Government wants to talk. But the SNP seems only to want to shout and walk away from further discussions. Doing so would demonstrate once and for all that Nicola Sturgeon will always put her own political interests before

the national interest.”

“In particular, the SNP need to confirm today they will not withdraw from key forums like the various Joint Ministerial Committees. These are a vital link between Scotland’s two governments, and ensure important projects like City and Regional Deals are operated successfully.”

“For once, Nicola Sturgeon should ditch the nationalist grand-standing and get on with the job in hand.”

Private sector jobs in decline under the SNP

12 Jun 2018



Private sector employment has significantly declined compared to the same quarter last year, according to figures released today.

Figures contained in ‘Public Sector Employment in Scotland – Statistics for 1st Quarter 2018’ show that Scotland’s private sector employment has declined by 11,290 compared to the 1st quarter of 2017.

These statistics follow the latest Scottish labour market statistics, also released today, which show that overall employment levels in Scotland also declined over the last quarter.

The Scottish labour market figures show that employment in Scotland during this period has declined by 2,000 while UK employment levels have increased by 146,000.

Dean Lockhart, Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary said:

“These figures are extremely disappointing for Scotland.

“The decline in private sector jobs is yet another sign that our economy under the SNP is stumbling.

“Yet again, we see the results of the SNP neglecting Scotland economy.

“The SNP has all the powers it needs to tackle this slow down and revitalise the Scottish economy.

“But the only economic growth plan the SNP has produced has been a blueprint for independence.

“The SNP must get back to the day job, stop obsessing about independence and focus on revitalising the Scottish economy.”

[Methadone implicated in record number of drugs deaths](#)

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12 Jun 2018



More than a third of people who die following a drug overdose are on substance substitutes like methadone at the time, a damning new report has revealed.

Analysis of drug-related deaths in 2016 revealed 37 per cent of the 865 people who lost their lives to an overdose were on such prescriptions.

And the vast majority of those had been receiving methadone for more than a year, the report confirmed.

That means 303 people who died as a result of a drug overdose in 2016 were already taking a substitute substance prescribed by the NHS.

That compares to 33 per cent (213) people in 2015, and 21 per cent (89 people) in 2009.

Today's 'National Drug-related Deaths Database (Scotland) Report' confirmed figures previously reported that the number of people dying as a result of substance abuse is on the rise.

It stated that the “rate is estimated to be the highest in Europe”, and revealed: “Further, the trajectory of Scotland's drug-related death rate suggests that deaths will continue to increase in the future.”

Most deaths in 2016 were male, although the trend of female fatalities is rising, accounting for 29 per cent in comparison to 21 per cent in 2009.

According to the data, 464 children lost a parent or parental-style figure to drugs in that year.

It revealed that 18 per cent of those who died – largely women – had been the victim of domestic abuse, while 77 per cent were already in contact with NHS and council support services.

The report also criticised the Scottish Government's Naloxone scheme, which hands addicts a kit to take when they think they might have overdosed.

It said: "Existing take-home Naloxone provision has not prevented substantial increases in opioid-related deaths in Scotland."

Fresh fears have also been raised about the role of so-called legal highs.

According to the report, Novel Psychoactive Substances deaths trebled within a year, from 112 to 346.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"These figures are hugely distressing, and prove the need more than ever for a new drugs strategy.

"Whatever is happening across Scotland isn't working, and hasn't worked for years.

"As a result, Scotland has the highest drugs death rate in Europe, and it's only going to get worse unless urgent action is taken.

"The fact so many people are being prescribed methadone, and then dying with it still in their system, is nothing short of a disgrace.

"This is what happens when you lazily park people on a drug-substitute with no prospect of ever beating the habit altogether.

"Any new strategy also has to take into account so-called legal highs.

"The fact the number of deaths from these new substances trebled in the space of a year shows us all the scale of that particular challenge.

"The Scottish Conservatives have consistently called for a new recovery-focused drugs strategy for Scotland.

"It's time SNP ministers got round the table to seek new ideas and interventions to address this tragic loss of life and the impact it has on individuals, families, and communities across Scotland."

[Make parole changes now to avoid 'mopping up after injustice'](#)

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12 Jun 2018



Justice secretary Michael Matheson has been urged to make changes to Scotland's parole system now, rather than wait for another high-profile case to expose its current failings.

The Scottish Conservatives are proposing a series of reforms to bring Scotland into line with best international practice.

Now in a letter to the Scottish Government, shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr has said action is necessary to restore public confidence and stand up for victims.

He said the party wants to see a shake-up of the system, including victims being able to attend parole board hearings, more information being given throughout the decision-making process, and a stronger right to appeal those outcomes.

Focus has fallen on the parole system after similar recent failings in relation to dangerous criminals being released from jail under other processes.

Last week, killer James Wright was sentenced to life in jail for the murder of father-of-three Craig McClelland in Paisley.

Wright had been "unlawfully at large" for nearly six months having breached the terms of his home detention curfew.

And earlier this year it emerged another dangerous offender, Robbie McIntosh, was days into his monitored release when he tried to repeat the killing of a dog walker 16 years on from the original crime.

Both cases led to criticism of Scotland's justice system, and calls to improve monitoring and decision-making across areas like home release and parole.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

"We believe there is a need for greater transparency and accountability in the way the Parole Board reaches decisions.

"These decisions are being made with little explanation as to why, nor are the views of victims being given enough weight in the process.

"Too often, politicians on both government and opposition benches only consider these matters in the wake of an egregious example, like the Worboys case or similar instances that we've seen here in recent weeks.

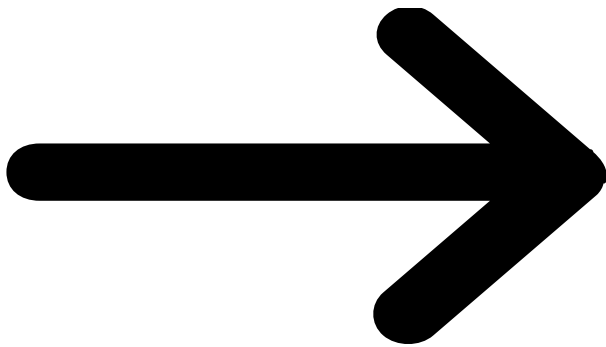
"This cycle needs to end.

"Rather than mopping up after injustice, it's time we acted to prevent these cases from happening in the first place."

[Domestic issues merely 'a warm-up act' for Sturgeon's independence speech](#)

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9 Jun 2018



Nicola Sturgeon has used her keynote conference speech to continue banging the drum for independence.

Despite claiming domestic issues like education are her priority, the First Minister told the SNP summit in Aberdeen that the "case for independence is strong, and getting stronger by the day".

The Scottish Conservatives have accused her yet again of sidelining crucial devolved matters to instead play to the gallery on nationalist attempts to break up Britain.

Latest polling has shown no increase in support for separation, and Nicola Sturgeon's personal approval ratings plummeting.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"This was yet another speech where Nicola Sturgeon's domestic responsibilities are a warm-up to the main act – banging on about independence.

"Bizarrely, despite claiming education was her top priority, she forgot to mention it altogether. Nor was there any mention of how to sort out our criminal justice system.

"She is out of touch and leading a divided party. This was a tired speech from a leader running out of time.

“We also saw the usual hypocrisy of Nicola Sturgeon simultaneously moaning about UK cutbacks while at the same time spending millions extra – thanks to UK funding.

“The SNP’s campaign used to be ‘It’s time’. Increasingly Scots are saying to Sturgeon that ‘Time’s up’.”