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Nicola Sturgeon has refused to rule out introducing tax hikes which would hit basic rate taxpayers right across the country.

At First Minister's Questions today, Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson invited her to echo previous SNP pledges that there would be no increases.

However, Ms Sturgeon dodged the issue, instead saying her party would treat the prospect of heavy increases with "an open mind".

This directly contradicts what both she and the SNP manifesto said before the most recent Holyrood elections, where it was acknowledged that such a move could lead to a loss of revenue.

Earlier this week, the First Minister hinted at tax increases as part of her Programme for Government.

That prompted warnings today from business leaders, including the Scottish Chambers of Commerce and the Scottish Retail Consortium, that raising income tax could even drive Scotland back to the brink of recession.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"Nicola Sturgeon's message is loud and clear – she's coming for the pay packets of workers right across Scotland.

"The First Minister made a promise not to increase income tax rates for basic rate taxpayers, and now she's going back on it.

"She needs to listen to business leaders who are telling her unequivocally that, if Scotland has higher income tax rates than the rest of the UK, it will be bad for the economy.

"Jacking up taxes on working families and businesses in Scotland will damage the Scottish Government's stated objective to get the economy growing again.

"Doing so will damage Scotland's reputation as a good place to do business, and stifle the ambitions we all share for the country."

Nicola Sturgeon promised not to increase income tax for basic rate taxpayers:
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/nicola-sturgeon-rules-out-raising-income-tax-rate-if-snp-is-re-elected-a6926786.html>

She also made the same pledge to the SNP conference (30 mins 55 secs):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R310bvBPRm0>

However, today she refused to rule out doing exactly that, and hinted at the measures in Tuesday's Programme for Government:
<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/09/ruth-responds-to-snps-programme-for-government/>

And earlier this week, SNP MSP Mark McDonald also failed to detail the SNP's proposals on tax when asked on Scotland Tonight. He said: "Well, I think we've set out our position very clearly that what we don't want to see is those in the lowest paid positions having to pay more tax and the part of James Kelly's answer that was missing, of course, was that the Labour party's position in relation to income tax going into the last election was that they would have seen those people having their tax bills increased."