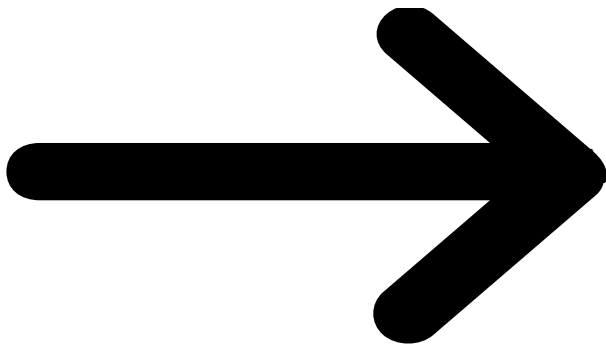


Sturgeon rules out tax help for middle-income Scots

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Nicola Sturgeon has refused to help middle-income Scots in the upcoming budget, even though millions elsewhere in the UK will receive a tax break.

At First Minister's Questions today, she was challenged to set out what she would do to reduce the widening gap in taxes paid between workers here and in the rest of Britain.

Scottish Conservative interim leader Jackson Carlaw pointed out that middle-earners like senior teachers, nurses and police officers could end up paying up to £1000 a year more than those doing the same jobs south of the border.

He asked Ms Sturgeon to give some "hope" to those workers ahead of finance secretary Derek Mackay's budget next month.

But she refused, instead setting out how she would have different spending priorities.

The First Minister was also challenged on the difference between projected public spending for Scotland under UK Government plans, which is almost three times higher than plans contained within the SNP's own independence blueprint.

Chancellor Philip Hammond said UK public spending would increase by 1.4 per cent every until 2024, where-as the nationalist's Growth Commission only aspired to 0.5 per cent.

Scottish Conservative interim leader Jackson Carlaw said:

"Despite demanding more money from the UK Government, and getting it, the SNP appears reluctant to pass on the same tax cuts.

“This was a chance for Nicola Sturgeon to offer a glimmer of hope to middle-earners across the country, including senior nurses, teachers and police officers, that she is on their side.

“But they’ll have seen her reaction, and will be bracing themselves for more misery in this upcoming budget.

“The SNP’s response to the budget has been an all-too-predictable whinge.

“The nationalists asked for a freeze on whisky duty – they got it. They asked for support for North Sea oil – they got it. And they wanted more overall investment from Westminster – they got it.

“The dismal reaction since is evidence that this is a grudge-and-grievance SNP government, led by a grudge-and-grievance First Minister.”