

Scottish Conservatives lodge 147 amendments to SNP's 'wrecking bill'

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11 Mar 2018



The Scottish Conservatives have submitted a total of 147 amendments to the Scottish Government's "farcical" Continuity Bill – as the party steps up the pressure this week for the SNP to dump it altogether.

In total, 231 amendments have been lodged from all parties at the Parliament.

Adam Tomkins, the party's constitutional spokesman today warns that Holyrood risks being turned into a "laughing stock" if the Bill is allowed to continue on its current schedule.

For example, on Tuesday, MSPs on the Finance Committee face analysing all 231 amendments in just one session – a direct consequence of the SNP's attempt to push the emergency legislation through.

The Scottish Conservatives' 147 amendments is eight more than the number brought forward by the SNP to the European Withdrawal Bill at Westminster.

The party is now urging the SNP to scrap the Bill – and focus instead on crucial discussions with the UK Government to deliver more powers for the Parliament.

It comes as the Prime Minister is due to meet Nicola Sturgeon on Wednesday.

Scottish Conservative constitution spokesman Adam Tomkins said:

"We've already made clear that the SNP's wrecking bill is bad law. The fact that parties at Holyrood have had to introduce more than 200 amendments only serves to demonstrate just how flawed it is.

"Farcically, MSPs from all parties will now have just one session on Tuesday to analyse them all before the SNP insists on an immediate vote.

"We are in danger of turning the Scottish Parliament into a laughing stock.

"The best thing for all concerned is for the bill to be dumped altogether.

"The only reason the SNP brought this forward in the first place was because it wanted a dry run for an independence referendum bill.

“Meanwhile, the actual business of the Scottish Parliament has now totally ground to a halt.

“Nicola Sturgeon should dump this pointless and farcical bill now – and get back to the negotiating table to secure a Brexit deal that delivers for us all.”

[Secondary school teacher numbers plummeting under SNP](#)

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9 Mar 2018



The Scottish Government has released figures showing that the number of secondary school teachers with a main subject has plummeted by over eleven per cent in the last ten years.

New figures published by the Scottish Government taken from the Teacher Census 2017 show that teacher numbers who teach in a main subject have dropped from 24,418 in 2008 to 21,707 in 2017, a loss of 2,711.

While secondary school teacher numbers have risen slightly over the last two years, these figures highlight a decade of decline under the SNP.

Most worryingly, english teachers have dropped almost 20 per cent, maths teachers have dropped 15 per cent and general science teachers have dropped 11 per cent.

Lastly, most modern language teachers have also seen massive drops, for example, french teachers have dropped by 32 percent and german teachers have dropped by 44 per cent.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith MSP said:

“The SNP’s empty promises on increasing teacher numbers have been laid bare as specialist secondary school teacher numbers continue to plummet.

“It is obvious that teachers are the most important resource in any school and so it is clear that this substantial decline in numbers will have a significantly negative effect on the level of education school children receive.

“Despite the SNP claiming the teacher shortage is diminishing because of extra recruits taken in in recent months, these statistics show the number of teachers is still dramatically lower than in 2008.

“We all know that the confusion and chaos during the SNP’s implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence has driven many teachers away.

“This is further evidence that a generation of school children is being badly let down by the SNP.”

[Football act’s conviction rate slumps to 3-year low](#)

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9 Mar 2018



The conviction rate of the SNP’s hated Offensive Behaviour at Football legislation has fallen to its lowest in three years – with a third of cases collapsing.

New figures have revealed that, of the 229 cases brought to court last year, just 157 resulted in a conviction.

That means the controversial Offensive Behaviour at Football (Scotland) Act had a conviction rate of 68.5 per cent in 2016/17.

It compares to 75.6 per cent in 2015/16, and 84.4 per cent the year before that.

The Scottish Conservatives said the slump in conviction rates was more proof that the act had to be scrapped, ahead of a Stage Three debate on the issue next week.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said it was clear sheriffs weren’t convinced by the legislation, the introduction of which the Scottish Conservatives have opposed from the outset.

Of all parties at Holyrood, only the SNP wants to see the act continue, despite widespread criticism from the judiciary and football supporters.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

“The fact the conviction rate with this act has slumped to a new low shows again why it has to be dropped.

“Clearly the courts don’t have faith in it as a piece of legislation, and football fans are sick of being victimised in this way.

“The Scottish Conservatives argued from the start that this was a needless move by the SNP, yet still the nationalists are sticking to their guns on this hated law.

“No-one, with the exception of the blinkered SNP, thinks this legislation is fair or reasonable, and it should be axed immediately.”

[NHS spending on locums breaks the £300m mark](#)

8 Mar 2018



Spending on temporary staff to plug gaps in Scotland’s NHS broke the £300 million mark for the first time last year, new research has shown.

Health boards were forced to spend more than £310 million in 2016/17 on locum doctors and nurses, an increase from £250 million the previous year.

And compared to 2014/15, the increase is more than £100 million.

The figures – obtained by the Scottish Conservatives through Freedom of Information – come as Scotland is in the grip of a GP crisis.

Earlier this week, a GP survey found that one in four practices has a doctor vacancy, while the overall number of GPs has reduced in recent years.

This issue was raised by Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson at First Minister’s Questions today, who also pointed out that in eight of the last 10 years, the share of GP funding has fallen north of the border.

She demanded Nicola Sturgeon explain why, after more than a decade in sole charge of the health brief, her SNP government has failed to act.

However, instead of addressing the problems in locum spending and general practice, the First Minister pointed to the performance of health systems in other parts of the UK.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“The number of GPs has plummeted in the face of increasing patient demand, and one in four surgeries is now short of a doctor.

“This is happening while the NHS at large in Scotland is being propped up by expensive private agencies to fill the gaps, because of poor workforce planning.

“This has occurred on the SNP’s watch – it is a mess of the nationalist government’s making.

“It’s the same old story from the First Minister – she wants people to ignore a record amassed over a decade, and instead blindly believe her promises for the future.

“But right across Scotland people are struggling to get an appointment with their GP, and family doctors are feeling the strain.

“The SNP government needs to explain why it’s allowed this to happen.”

[Scottish Conservatives call for employers not to penalise staff for observing red weather warning](#)

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5 Mar 2018



The Scottish Conservatives are calling for employers to observe best practice and not to penalise employees who were unable to get to work during the recent snow storms.

Due to amber and red weather warnings, public transport was suspended and people were told not to travel unless it was an emergency.

Reports have now emerged that some employees may have been threatened with a loss of wages, having not made it to work during this time.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“No employee should be financially penalised for not being able to get to work through some of the worst weather Scotland has seen for years.

“Indeed, even if it was possible to get to work, the red weather warning specifically stated that only emergency travel was permitted in order to protect everyone’s safety.

“The Scottish Conservatives are therefore calling on all employers to observe best practice and pay all their staff over the snow days.

“The many acts of kindness and heroism that we have all seen over the last few days should not be marred by the meanness of a few.”