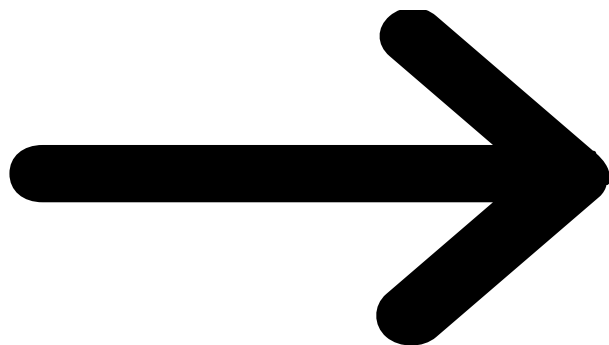


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3 Aug 2017



MSPs who've publicly supported Venezuela's socialist regime should admit their mistake, as the country stands on the brink of disaster.

Opposition leaders have been hauled from their homes and taken to prison, while the UK Government has advised all British nationals to leave the country.

In addition, voting firms say the weekend's election was almost certainly "fixed".

Despite this, a number of SNP, Labour and Green politicians have been gushing in their praise for the hard-left regime.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw said their approach was "an embarrassment for Holyrood", and that their respective leaders should distance themselves from the remarks.

Several parliamentary motions have been tabled praising the Venezuelan government, including the late Hugo Chavez.

Labour's Neil Findlay has been effusive in his praise for both Chavez and current president Nicolas Maduro, hailing their "social reforms aimed at addressing the legacy of inequality" and "governing in the interests of the Venezuelan people".

Fellow Labour member Elaine Smith urged MSPs to "note the reported international praise for Venezuela's electoral system". In the latest vote, the government there said turnout was more than eight million, while the opposition put the figure at 2.5 million amid reports of deserted polling stations.

Nationalist MSP Sandra White applauded authorities for “transforming Latin America into a progressive area”, a motion signed by dozens of other MSPs.

And in 2010 Jamie Hepburn, now a Scottish Government minister, said: “Venezuela has been transformed through the progressive policies pursued by the Chavez administration in the last decade.” That motion was signed by, among others, Joe Fitzpatrick and Aileen Campbell.

Greens Ross Greer and John Finnie have also praised the left-wing administration on social media.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“This lefty love-in for the Venezuelan government has to stop.

“It’s an embarrassment for Holyrood.

“It’s all very well for left-wing politicians to offer misty-eyed praise for a regime they’d love to see in place across Scotland and the UK.

“But the fact is it’s a brutal dictatorship which has brought Venezuela to its knees.

“Now opposition leaders are being ripped from their beds in the middle of the night, in front of their families, and thrown in jail. Presumably, as an opposition politician, Neil Findlay wouldn’t like this to happen to him.

“It’s time for the Scottish Parliament to wake up to this nonsense.

“These MSPs have to stop behaving like short-sighted student politicians and realise that, in the real world, this socialist experiment has been nothing short of devastating.”

[Campaign for Frank’s Law goes to his home turf](#)

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2 Aug 2017



The campaign for a law in memory of Frank Kopel will go to the home of Dundee United tomorrow, the ground where the former footballer spent a decade of his career.

His wife Amanda will be joined by shadow health secretary Miles Briggs as they encourage people to contribute to a consultation which could lead to the enacting of Frank's Law.

If successful, the legislation would see those suffering conditions like dementia – but are under the age of 65 – receive the same free personal care provided to those over that age.

Frank died in 2014 at the age 65, six years after being diagnosed with dementia.

The Member's Bill consultation is open until October 6, and both Miles and Amanda will use tomorrow's visit to encourage more individuals and organisations to take part.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"It's great to visit the City of Discovery and Tannadice.

"I know how Dundee United fans have been a great support to Amanda and have very much been at the forefront of the campaign to deliver Frank's Law from the outset.

"The consultation on my Member's Bill proposal runs until October 6, and I urge individuals and organisations across Scotland to give their views during this period.

"That way we can demonstrate the level of support for removing the age discrimination that exists for those who need free personal care.

"That is why Frank's Law is so desperately needed today. For too many families, it was needed yesterday.

"The sooner SNP ministers act to bring forward a detailed timetable to deliver Frank's Law, the sooner we can see the vital support and dignity in care needed for so many individuals and their families."

Amanda Kopeł added:

"The army of supporters grows each day, as the people of Scotland realise we need Frank's Law.

"They know the discrimination is manmade, and that it should end sooner rather than later.

"More importantly, they know that it may be either themselves, or a member of their family, who may need personal care due to a disease, disability or illness in future.

"They need an assurance that, should that happen, there is a system in place allowing them to live with the dignity and respect that is every human being's right.

"I am so grateful to the thousands of people who are standing shoulder-to-shoulder with me on this vitally important issue.

"I will be at Tannadice to stand proudly beside the Frank's Law banner and flag, not only to raise awareness for the campaign, but to encourage people to take a few minutes to get involved in the consultation."

Ends

Notes to editors:

Tomorrow's photocall will take place at Tannadice, which is on Tannadice Street, Dundee DD3 7JW.

All media are invited to attend from 1pm, at which point both Miles and Amanda will be available for photographs and interview.

The consultation is available here:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/105518.aspx>

[SNP must heed warnings to prepare NHS for ageing population](#)

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2 Aug 2017



The SNP has been urged to start listening to warnings about an ageing population, after projections today showed the number of pensioners is set to increase by 28 per cent.

The National Records of Scotland estimated the hike over the next 25 years, which would bring with it a rise in conditions like dementia.

Hospitals across the country are already struggling to cope with increasing numbers of patients, particularly those with diseases linked to living longer.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said the NHS was already struggling as a result of the SNP's failure to plan for an ageing population.

And he said the problems would only worsen as that demographic increased.

Today's report revealed how the elderly population has rocketed in the last 10 years north of the border.

But by 2039, the number of over 75s will have gone from 430,000 to around 800,000.

In contrast, the population of 0-15-year-olds will rise by only one per cent.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"Scotland's population has been ageing for some time, but this is a trend that's been utterly neglected by the SNP.

"We can already see the strain this Scottish Government complacency has put on the NHS.

"The warnings have been sounded for years, but the SNP has done nothing.

"Unless we see swift action now, the problems for hospital staff and patients are only going to get worse in the years ahead.

"The report is quite clear that there's going to be a heavily increasing elderly population north of the border, who risk being served by an NHS which won't be remotely equipped to provide the help they need."

To see the full report, visit:

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//statistics/rgar/16/16rgar.pdf>

[Suicides across Scotland rise by 8%](#)

2 Aug 2017



The number of suicides recorded across Scotland rose last year by eight per cent, new figures have shown.

There were 728 cases in 2016, up from 672 the previous year.

The ISD Scotland statistics revealed males were more than twice as likely as females to take their own lives.

In addition, Scotland's deprived areas had considerably higher suicide rates than wealthier parts.

According to the data, those between 45 and 54 accounted for the most deaths

of any age group.

Scottish Conservative mental health spokeswoman Annie Wells said:

“These figures reflect hundreds of avoidable personal tragedies that have taken place in Scotland over the last year.

“The fact there has been such a notable increase should focus minds right across the board.

“There is broad agreement across all political parties that mental health now has to be a priority.

“There can’t be many topics more important than suicide, and that is why everyone in the Scottish Parliament has to work together to make sure help is on hand for those who need it.

“We’re never going to be in a situation in Scotland where we can prevent every suicide.

“But there are hundreds of lives here which could have been saved, and we have to ensure more is done to reduce these statistics in future years.”

[Quarter of care homes must improve, figures show](#)

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2 Aug 2017



Hundreds of care homes in Scotland must improve standards after missing out on good or excellent ratings by inspectors.

Figures obtained by the Scottish Conservatives have revealed one in four facilities were rated unsatisfactory, weak or adequate by the Care Inspectorate as of March this year.

According to the analysis, it means 275 care homes have work to do to bring themselves up to standard.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs urged the Scottish Government to work more closely with the care home sector and local authorities to ensure improvements were made.

He said, with an ageing population and a shortage of care home spaces leading to bed-blocking in Scotland's hospitals, it was essential more was done to raise standards.

Care homes in Scotland can receive five possible grades which take in a range of themes.

The figures show 75.5 per cent received good or excellent results.

The others were deemed unsatisfactory, weak, or adequate – where bosses say the service “should address areas of weakness”.

The 24.5 per cent receiving below-par ratings compares to 26.2 per cent in 2016, and 28.8 per cent the year before.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“While it’s welcome to see so many care homes being given good ratings, there are still hundreds which are falling below expectation.

“That’s not good enough, and the residents and staff of these under-pressure facilities deserve better.

“Scotland has a well-documented ageing population and, as time goes on, these care homes are only going to become busier and more important.

“The SNP should make moves to sort this out now.

“For one in four Scottish care homes to either be failing, or have improvements to make, is simply not good enough.”