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- Sturgeon owes Holyrood an explanation over CAP cover-up

29 Jun 2017



Nicola Sturgeon owes the Scottish Parliament an explanation after failing to disclose that her government had sought an extension on farming payments.

Last week, the First Minister refused to say whether the Scottish Government had made the request to Europe for paying Common Agricultural Policy cash to farmers.

It has since emerged she and her cabinet had been informed such an extension would be sought days earlier, and today was put under pressure as to why she pleaded ignorance.

At First Minister's Questions, the Scottish Conservative leader said having apologised to farmers for botching the CAP payments process for the second year on the trot, she should now say sorry to Holyrood for not being up front last week.

Instead, Ms Sturgeon said farmers across the country were happy with the SNP's performance on CAP, despite the fact just 82 per cent of the cash has been paid ahead of tomorrow's deadline.

Audit Scotland have said, if the Scottish Government misses the deadline, it could be fined up to £60 million.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"Last week I asked the First Minister three times if her government had contacted the EC to seek an extension, and three times she refused to answer.

"We subsequently found out the extension had been requested, and she had been informed.

"That's why Nicola Sturgeon has to explain why she tried to hide this from the Scottish Parliament.

"People watching will have rightly wondered if this was a case of misleading parliament.

"Farmers have been badly let down by the SNP, and it's no wonder they've turned their back on the nationalists.

“But parliament needs an explanation too, because the ministerial code is clear about ministers providing accurate and truthful information.

“The SNP fell far below those standards in recent weeks.”

It emerged yesterday that the Scottish Government had been told of the CAP delay, prior to both Nicola Sturgeon and Fergus Ewing denying it:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/06/scottish-government-cabinet-was-told-about-farm-payments-delay/>

[Bill lodged to make Frank's Law a reality](#)

29 Jun 2017



A bill to introduce Frank's Law – a guarantee that under 65s with conditions like dementia receive free personal care – has been officially lodged.

Shadow health secretary Miles Briggs was joined in Holyrood today by Amanda Kopel, the wife of former footballer Frank, who died three years ago having been diagnosed with dementia at the age of 59.

The member's bill will allow MSPs to vote on introducing the legislation, which is now supported by all opposition parties.

Some SNP MSPs – including former health secretary Alex Neil – are also keen on the move, even if the party itself has refused to offer support generally.

The bill will open for consultation next week.

Earlier this year, Miles said he would launch the bill if the Scottish Government failed to act.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

“I was delighted to welcome Amanda Kopel to the Scottish Parliament today to mark the lodging of my Member's Bill proposal to implement Frank's Law.

“Amanda's passionate and dedicated campaigning on this issue has been inspirational.

“The consultation on the bill proposal will go live next week and I hope that

as many organisations and individuals as possible will take part to demonstrate the level of support for Frank's Law.

"The aim is simple: to end the age discrimination that currently exists whereby under 65s with life limiting conditions do not qualify for free personal care but over 65s do.

"April 16 marked the third anniversary of Frank Kopel's death.

"It is a shocking indictment that in some parts of Scotland today, terminally ill patients under the age of 65 are being charged for the help they need with basic things like washing, dressing and feeding themselves.

"We want to see this change and I am pleased that all opposition parties in this parliament have committed to supporting the policy meaning there is a majority in Holyrood for Frank's Law."

The Scottish Conservatives have consistently supported the campaign for Frank's Law:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/03/franks-law-members-bill-to-launch-in-summer/>

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/01/bill-on-franks-law-to-be-brought-forward-if-snp-dragg-heels/>

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2016/12/sharp-rise-in-u65s-with-dementia-shows-need-for-franks-law/>

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The prospect of Scotland officially entering recession, in direct contrast to the fast-growing UK economy, hangs in the balance, experts have warned.

In a report assessing the state of the economy, the Fraser of Allander Institute produced analysis which shows Scotland's economy continues to perform poorly.

The economy shrank in the final three months of 2016, it said, and another quarter's fall would mean the country had entered a technical recession for the first time since the global downturn.

Experts said the economy north of the border "remains in a precarious position".

Their forecast was for growth to be at 1.2 per cent for 2017, 1.4 per cent 2018, and 1.6 per cent in 2019. All of these are behind UK indicators.

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:

"Scotland's economy continues to badly under-perform thanks to this SNP government.

"As this report states, whether or not Scotland officially enters recession hangs in the balance.

"And that's while the rest of the UK powers ahead, so the SNP can't possibly blame Brexit.

"This is on the Scottish Government's shoulders, and it has to explain what it is going to do to kick-start the economy it is in charge of.

"Make no mistake, Scotland has great potential.

"But that potential has been utterly neglected by an SNP government which has its priorities focused elsewhere."

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

"The continuing under-performance of Scotland's economy will adversely impact the levels of spending the Scottish Government will have going forward.

"Holyrood's new powers means that Scotland's economic performance matters more than ever before.

"Even small variations in relative performance will translate into hundreds of millions of pounds in tax revenues within a short period of time."

The full Fraser of Allander report will be published tomorrow morning.

Earlier this year, it was confirmed that Scotland was half-way to recession after three months of economic decline:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/04/scotland-halfway-towards-recession-under-the-snp/>

[Shadow cabinet reshuffle to 'put Sturgeon on notice'](#)

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28 Jun 2017



Scottish Conservative MSP Donald Cameron has been handed a key new post as the party's chief policy co-ordinator in a major shake-up of the Scottish Conservative team.

Announcing the move today, leader Ruth Davidson said the plan showed the party was determined to provide a credible alternative government to an SNP administration focused solely on independence.

And she added the move was an indication that Nicola Sturgeon was "being put on notice" by the Scottish Conservatives ahead of the next Holyrood election.

Mr Cameron will be given responsibility for policy development ahead of that vote.

His appointment comes as part of a wider reshuffle to the Scottish Conservative team.

Three MSPs are promoted to the shadow cabinet:

Miles Briggs will take over as the party's shadow health secretary.

Liam Kerr has been named as shadow justice secretary.

And Rachel Hamilton becomes shadow cabinet secretary for culture and tourism.

West of Scotland MSP Maurice Golden has been named the party's new chief whip, following John Lamont's election to Westminster.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"The SNP's bubble has burst and people across Scotland are now looking for change.

"The Scottish Conservatives have done a strong job holding the Scottish Government to account since becoming the main opposition at Holyrood last year.

"Now we have to step it up.

"That's why I've asked Donald Cameron to take on the role of co-ordinating

and developing policy with the shadow cabinet team as we look towards the elections in 2021.

“I am serious about offering the voters of Scotland a choice at those elections with the Conservatives as a credible alternative government of Scotland.

“It’s not enough to simply point out where the SNP has performed badly or let Scotland down.

“This is about showing what we’d do differently and how we can move Scotland forward.

“In areas such as education, public services and the economy we are bursting with ideas and we will work with stakeholders across Scotland to bring forward a manifesto in 2021 which can command the support of the country.

“Nicola Sturgeon is being put on notice.

“It’s time Scotland had a government committed to the day job and that’s exactly the offer we will take to the country.”

Scottish Conservative MSP Donald Cameron said:

“I’m delighted to be asked by Ruth to undertake a general policy co-ordination role, with a view to the 2021 election.

“The Scottish Conservatives will produce a manifesto that draws on a wide range of expertise in all policy areas, proposing our vision for Scotland, and confirming us as a government-in-waiting.”

Prior to becoming an MSP, Donald Cameron worked at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC (1999 to 2000).

He was also Standing Junior Counsel to the Scottish Government from 2009 to 2016.

The full Scottish Conservative shadow cabinet and ministerial team is below

Scottish Conservative shadow cabinet and spokesmen and women

Leader – Ruth Davidson MSP

Chief Whip and Business Manager, Spokesperson for the Low Carbon Economy– Maurice Golden MSP

Deputy Leader and Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Europe and External Affairs – Jackson Carlaw MSP

Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Finance – Murdo Fraser MSP
Transport and Infrastructure – Jamie Greene MSP

Taxation – Bill Bowman MSP

Financial Sustainability – Tom Mason MSP

Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work – Dean Lockhart MSP
Business, Innovation and Energy and Deputy Business Manager– Alexander Burnett MSP

Jobs, Employability and Training – Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP

Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport – Miles Briggs MSP

Mental Health, Public Health and Equalities – Annie Wells MSP

Health Education, Lifestyle and Sport – Brian Whittle MSP

Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills – Liz Smith MSP

Further Education, Higher Education and Science – Oliver Mundell MSP

Childcare and Early Years – Michelle Ballantyne MSP

2021 Policy Coordinator, Shadow Cabinet Secretary for the Climate Change, Environment, Land Reform– Donald Cameron

Biodiversity, Animal Welfare and the Digital Economy – Finlay Carson

Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity– Peter Chapman MSP

Rural Affairs – Edward Mountain

Farming – John Scott

Shadow Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Communities, Social Security and Equalities – Adam Tomkins MSP

Welfare Reform – Jeremy Balfour MSP

Housing and Communities – Graham Simpson MSP

Local Government – Alexander Stewart MSP

Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Justice – Liam Kerr MSP

Legal Affairs – Gordon Lindhurst MSP

Community Safety and Veterans Affairs – Maurice Corry MSP

Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Tourism – Rachael Hamilton MSP

Tourism and Small Business – Alison Harris MSP

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28 Jun 2017



The Scottish Government's cabinet was told about plans to seek an extension in processing vital farming payments, days before both Nicola Sturgeon and the rural affairs secretary evaded the issue.

It was revealed in Holyrood today that Fergus Ewing informed members of the cabinet that he was likely to seek permission from Europe to extend the deadline for delivering CAP payments to Scotland's farmers.

This is despite the fact, on Wednesday and Thursday last week, both he and the First Minister – when directly asked – dodged the question.

It means the Scottish Government's most senior members – including the First Minister – would have had this information before the issue was publicised at the end of last week.

At today's rural economy and connectivity committee, following questioning from Scottish Conservative MSP Jamie Greene, Mr Ewing conceded cabinet had been informed that the extension would be requested.

He then added he was unsure if Nicola Sturgeon herself was present at the meeting, though she will have been informed of what was discussed. Scottish Government cabinet meetings take place every Tuesday.

At today's committee, Mr Ewing also admitted payments would not be made by the Friday deadline, meaning farmers have been left waiting for cash for two years running.

Scottish Conservative shadow rural affairs secretary Peter Chapman said:

"We now know that the Scottish Government's cabinet was told that this extension would be requested.

"Despite knowing this, both Fergus Ewing and Nicola Sturgeon pleaded ignorance last week, even after the disclosure had been made to cabinet.

"This is yet another incident of the SNP completely lacking in transparency.

"It's simply not good enough for figures as senior as the First Minister to shrug her shoulders when repeatedly asked something, even though her cabinet had already been informed.

"It's insulting to the parliament and, more seriously, a slap in the face to thousands of farmers who are yet again waiting for crucial CAP payments."

Scottish Government cabinet meets on Tuesdays.

Today, Fergus Ewing said he had informed cabinet that the extension would be sought.

But last Wednesday, when asked by shadow rural affairs secretary Peter

Chapman if the extension had been requested, he refused to say.

A day later, Ruth Davidson repeatedly asked Nicola Sturgeon the same question. She also declined to tell MSPs.

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/06/sturgeon-must-come-clean-on-second-cap-crisis/>