

Scottish Independence Referendum – Nicola Sturgeon's view



By Nicola Sturgeon, Deputy First Minister

There are only days to go now. On September 18, we'll have the biggest opportunity in Scotland's political history. We'll decide whether we should be an independent country.

As Deputy First Minister of Scotland, I'm asking you to vote Yes. That's because I believe with all my heart that Scotland can, should and must be an independent country.

There are many good reasons why we need to be independent. One of the most important is that we will always get the governments we vote for.

Let's take the last General Election in 2010. Once again, Scotland overwhelmingly rejected the Tories. They won just one – that's right, one – Westminster seat out of 59 north of the border.

Yet we are now saddled with a Tory government which is hammering our poor and vulnerable, pushing our children into poverty and harming our economy with austerity.

You may well ask if we can afford to be independent. It's a fair question, and there's a very clear answer: there's absolutely no doubt that we can.

Even now, we're better off financially than the UK as a whole. According to the Financial Times, Scotland is already one of the top 20 wealthiest nations in the world – richer per head than France and Japan.

We've generated more tax per person than the UK for every one of the last 33 years. And we're blessed with a strong and diverse economy which is about much more than oil.

We've a fantastic food and drink industry worth £13 billion, manufacturing exports alone of £15 billion, we're world leaders in creative industries, life sciences and renewables. With independence, we'll be able to capitalise on all these fantastic assets and use our wealth to generate more

opportunities. No longer will our taxes and best people drain south. Instead we'll protect and develop our own public services and build a fairer and more equal society.

By taking action such as removing Trident weapons of mass destruction from the Clyde and opting out of the House of Lords, we'll save £600 million a year – money we will put back into Scotland.

We'll also protect pensions as well as helping the low paid, preserve free over-60s travel and prescriptions and create thousands of new jobs.

Of course, a Yes vote won't bring us a land of milk and honey. We'll have to work hard, and we'll make mistakes. But they'll be our mistakes, and we'll learn from them.

I want a country which gives its people the lives they deserve – a country which rewards work, cherishes education, provides for all, gives hope and dignity to the elderly and vulnerable and allows families to thrive and children to flourish.