

# Statement from Douglas Ross MP

**Douglas Ross MP was appointed leader of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party earlier today. This followed the resignation of Jackson Carlaw MSP as leader last week.**

**Mr Ross was unopposed in his bid to lead the party, and it is understood he will stand in the Scottish Parliamentary elections next year.**

Meantime Ruth Davidson MSP will act in his stead at Holyrood during First Minister's Questions.

Mr Ross's statement is as follows: "Becoming the leader of the Scottish Conservatives today is the honour and privilege of a lifetime. I want to thank all those who have given me so much encouragement over the last week. My focus now is on earning the support and trust of people across Scotland who are looking for a positive and credible alternative in Scotland, and who want a fresh start for our country."

"I begin this next step in my life as many young people consider their own futures. The nervous wait for exam results by thousands of young Scots yesterday ended for too many – particularly for those from more disadvantaged areas – in disappointment, confusion and anger. While I didn't achieve great exam results, that was purely down to me. My teachers taught me everything I needed to know and I had the opportunity to prove what I'd learned through the exams I sat."

“This week one in every four exam entries were downgraded. The Scottish Government claims this was necessary to add credibility to the results, but there is nothing credible in the way individual successes and achievements has been taken away from young people through no fault of their own. We now need the Scottish Government to pull out the stops to ensure the appeals process is accelerated, so young people have clarity as quickly as possible.”

“As leader, education will be a crucial policy area for the Scottish Conservatives. Right now, I know many young people and teachers don’t feel that it is a top priority for the Scottish Government.”

“I am also acutely aware that I begin this role at a time of national crisis. The Coronavirus pandemic is far from over and – as today’s developments in Aberdeen show us – the virus is still out there and can strike with little warning. We also have to prepare for a potential second wave of this disease.”

“I want the efforts of both the UK and Scottish Governments to succeed, because that’s how we protect people’s lives and livelihoods, which is what we all want.”

“It’s in that spirit that I’ll lead the party in this crisis. Where mistakes have been made by the Scottish Government, such as in areas like care homes, the Scottish Conservatives will fulfil our role as Scotland’s main opposition party and hold the government to account for those failures. We need every mistake to be probed and learned from, because doing so will help us in the months to come.”

“At the same time, I will seek common ground where possible, taking a responsible and constructive approach, so that the key messages that the government needs to convey on public health and safety are heard loud and clear.”

“We will beat this pandemic – and we will do so by holding to our democratic values of respectful and open debate, robust

scrutiny and firm but fair criticism of government.”

“But Scotland does not just need crisis management at this time, however vital that is. We must also set our sights on the horizon and look to the future too. Changed times bring with them uncertainty and fear – but also opportunity. And as I take over this job, I do so with a feeling of huge excitement at the potential Scotland has to emerge stronger and more united from this crisis.”

“As the crisis has shown, when we come together, we can meet the biggest of challenges. So we can be optimistic about overcoming the challenges we undoubtedly still face.”

“As leader of the Scottish Conservatives, I will work every day to keep the spirit of unity alive during the vital period ahead.”

“In short, in taking on this job today, I am applying for another: to champion a post-referendum Scotland where we focus not on the divisions of the past but on rebuilding our country from the brink, restoring our reputation for educational excellence, empowering our regions and remote communities, and providing the decent jobs that everyone can aspire to. I am applying to work for anyone and everyone in Scotland who wants that to be the focus of our national debate, who wants to move the country forward, and wants that work to start now.”

“Over the coming days and weeks, I will be setting out my plans for the first phase of my leadership. As well as publishing a major jobs plan in my first month as Leader, I want to spend time listening and talking to Scots from all political perspectives about their priorities and hopes for the future. While I cannot yet take part in debates in Holyrood, I want to use my position to spend more time talking outside the political bubble directly with people across Scotland.”

“That way, when we come to the Holyrood election next year,

our manifesto will end up being rooted in the beliefs, passions and values of Scottish families and businesses – a manifesto for Scotland.”

“And I want to set out this positive programme for Scotland in an atmosphere where the tone of debate is lifted to the level of the challenges we face. I yield to no-one in wanting a robust, tough political debate. But the border between challenge and personal abuse is crossed far too often and the social media vitriol meted out to political leaders of all political persuasions must be stopped.”

“All of this requires a huge amount of work – in a short space of time. But my guarantee to Scots is that when we head to the polling stations next May, the Scottish Conservatives will provide them with the credible and competent alternative to the SNP that the country so desperately needs.”

“We are going to ask you for your support – I want to spend the next 9 months showing that we are deserving of it.”

“We seek a better debate. A more positive future for our country. United, we will take Scotland forward.”