

Further calls for SNP transparency on finances

The Scottish Conservatives are to renew their calls for a statement from Humza Yousaf on the state of the SNP's finances at Holyrood on Wednesday.

Scottish Conservative Leader Douglas Ross will lead a debate in parliament in which the Conservatives – as Holyrood's main opposition party – will demand greater transparency from the SNP on party and government affairs.

The debate comes against the backdrop of Operation Branchform which is investigating the SNP finances. Two arrests have been made – Peter Murrell and Colin Beattie MSP – but both men were released after questioning without charge

The Scottish Conservatives say that “legitimate questions” must be addressed by the First Minister because if there is an “imminent threat to the SNP's viability” as a legal entity, it would have obvious consequences for the government.

In addition, they claim that addressing the ongoing crisis within his party is distracting Humza Yousaf from his duties as leader of the Scottish government.

Douglas Ross' motion – which will be debated during the Scottish Conservatives' party business time – draws comparisons between the secrecy shown by the SNP in party matters and their lack of accountability and transparency in

government. It calls for more openness in both areas.

A number of journalists speaking to Mr Ross over recent days have asked whether the Conservatives will disclose their membership numbers – which the party continues to decline to do. It was initially the question over the truth about the number of SNP members which led to the resignation of the former Chief Executive, Peter Murrell.

Mr Ross said: “These questions are not going away for the First Minister and SNP leader, who recently had to step in as the SNP’s acting treasurer.

“He cannot stick his fingers in his ears and claim this is not a matter for his government – as well as his party – especially if the SNP were to face bankruptcy or an imminent threat to their viability.

“This is clearly also a government matter if the First Minister is compromised, his hands are tied, or if he has been kept in the dark about his party’s affairs – as was the case with the resignation of the SNP’s auditors.

“Right now, the real priorities of Scotland are being ignored by him and the SNP government because they are distracted by the meltdown in the party.

“The unacceptable secrecy that has characterised the SNP in government – on ferries, the Lochaber smelter, the Salmond affair and many others – is equally evident in its internal financial scandal, and it has to stop.

“The public must have confidence that Humza Yousaf is treating this investigation as seriously as possible and this debate gives him the opportunity to address these questions in full.”

The motion reads:

S6M-08764 Douglas Ross: Transparency of Scotland's Governing Party—That the Parliament believes that the First Minister, as leader of the governing party of Scotland, should make a statement to the chamber of the Scottish Parliament about the governance of the Scottish National Party (SNP); agrees that these are matters of public interest and should be properly scrutinised and debated in the national parliament; notes that the Scottish Government has lacked transparency and openness in its administration of government across Scotland; calls, therefore, on the Scottish Government to end its pre-release access of statistics, deliver a more transparent budget process, give arm's-length bodies control over information publication, publish a transparency list of public sector officials who earn more than the First Minister, set swifter publication dates for ministerial expenses and transport dates and improve scrutiny of breaches of the ministerial code, and condemns the SNP for its lack of candour about its membership and governance, and for its abject failure to concentrate on the priorities of the people of Scotland.



The Scottish Parliament. Photo © 2023 Martin P. McAdam
www.martinmcadam.com