

Scotland's Programme for Government laid before parliament

The First Minister was on his feet for just over half an hour on Tuesday afternoon introducing his first Programme for Government.

At the end of that opposition party leaders including Douglas Ross, the Scottish Conservatives Leader, Anas Sarwar leader of Scottish Labour and Alex Cole Hamilton, leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats responded to the statement which they had already had sight of.

The government billed the new programme for legislation as a way of reducing poverty, delivering growth, tackling climate change and providing high quality public services.

The year long programme includes the following:

- expanding access to funded childcare from nine months
- paying social care workers in a direct care role and frontline staff providing funded early learning and childcare in the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector, at least £12 an hour from April
- speeding up renewable energy projects with a new deal for the onshore wind industry
- delivering a new £15 million support package to unleash entrepreneurial talent
- expanding free school meals in primary schools

The programme includes 14 new bills which will be added to the 11 already before parliament.

Other headlines include a pilot scheme to remove peak-time fares on Scotrail to make rail travel more accessible and affordable and also a ban on single use vapes.

The First Minister said: “The Scottish Government will always be on the side of the people we serve. Scotland is – certainly should be – a land of opportunity, but I know it doesn’t always feel like that to people bearing the brunt of the UK Government cost-of-living crisis, to families living in the poverty, to struggling businesses, to those who still face consequences of discrimination and inequality. I get that.

“This Programme is an opportunity to be explicit about the driving mission of this government. So let me make it abundantly clear, we are a government who will maximise every lever at our disposal to tackle the scourge of poverty in our country.

“But let me be equally clear, we also need to support economic growth. Not for its own sake but so we can tackle poverty and improve our public services. And we will be unapologetic in taking the action necessary to ensure a sustainable future for our children and planet.

“The unfortunate reality is that the Scottish Government is currently operating with one hand tied behind our back. In the last five years we have spent more than £700 million in countering the impact of UK Government welfare cuts alone.

“That’s why this government will never stop believing that decisions about Scotland should not be made by a government based in Westminster, but by the people of Scotland. In proposing the case for independence we will set out a positive vision for Scotland’s future.

“Scotland’s economy already performs better than most parts of

the UK, we have world-class universities and colleges, and significant strengths and potential in many of the key economic sectors of the future. Today's Programme for Government sets out how we will build on these strengths, to make people's lives better.

"In the year ahead, we will support more than 300,000 children with more than £1,000 a year through the Scottish Child payment. We will expand the availability of high quality childcare – providing funding in six early adopter local authority areas to offer increased access to childcare from nine months through to the end of primary school. And we will invest in raising the pay of childcare and social care staff.

"We will also safeguard the rights of tenants, promote payment of the living wage, and provide help for disabled people with complex needs, so that they can live independent lives.

"We will do all of this – first and foremost because it is the right thing to do. And also, as I know well from my own family history, because providing people with support and security helps them to contribute to society and to create opportunities for others. This Programme for Government shows how we will make progress towards a fairer, wealthier and greener Scotland."

Scottish Conservatives

The Scottish Conservatives said that Humza Yousaf is a poor Nicola Sturgeon tribute act indicating that there is not much which has changed even with the change of leader six months ago.

Scottish Conservative leader Douglas Ross said: "Humza Yousaf could have come to Parliament and offered Scotland a fresh approach by focusing on the big challenges we all face, not the political obsessions of the SNP.

“He could have been the First Minister and not the First Activist.

“Yet instead he has decided to follow in the footsteps of his disgraced predecessor.

“All Humza Yousaf can offer Scotland is a poor Nicola Sturgeon tribute act.

“He’s still diverting public money towards campaigning for independence when families are struggling with a cost-of-living crisis.

“At next year’s General Election, the Scottish people have the chance to make the SNP pay the price for this and their other numerous failures in office – and in swathes of seats across Scotland it’s only the Scottish Conservatives who can unseat them.

“Humza Yousaf’s toxic alliance with the extremist Greens makes a mockery of his claim today to be on the side of business.

“After abandoning North Sea oil and gas, failing to pass on the rates relief available south of the border, and making Scotland the highest taxed part of the UK, it’s amazing he kept a straight face.

“Just today we’ve seen a demonstration outside parliament against his plans to decimate the short-term letting industry, while his statement contained no timetable on dualling the A9 and only a passing mention of the SNP’s ferries scandal.

“Against this background, it’s little wonder just nine per cent of Scottish businesses believe Humza Yousaf’s government understands them.

“While the scandal-ridden SNP are distracted by their internal civil war, the Scottish Conservatives will focus on Scotland’s real priorities – the global cost-of-living crisis, unacceptable NHS waiting times and economic growth.”



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