

Health Secretary quits over bill for data roaming charges

Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care, Michael Matheson, has tendered his resignation to the First Minister today, months after the matter of the £11,000 bill for data roaming charges for his government iPad first came to light.



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Michael Matheson MSP
Falkirk West Constituency

Humza Yousaf MSP
First Minister
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

8 February 2024

Dear First Minister,

I am writing to advise you of my decision to resign from my role as Cabinet Secretary NHS Recovery, Health, and Social Care.

It has been a privilege to serve in Government for almost 13 years, serving in five different portfolios with four being in Cabinet. Throughout my time in Government, I have always strived to do my absolute best for the people of Scotland, progressing legislation and policy to make Scotland a fairer and more prosperous place.

This has included taking forward world leading domestic abuse legislation, reform of our female custodial estate, introducing Self-Directed Support for independent living, bringing ScotRail back into public ownership and completing the ScotWind leasing round to ensure Scotland is not only a world leader in offshore renewables, but will deliver the investment and jobs to secure prosperity.

Over the course of the last year, I have sought to ensure that we support our NHS as it continues to recover from the pandemic. I have witnessed first-hand the outstanding work that goes on across NHS Scotland every day, led by staff dedicated to providing the best possible care to patients. Our investment and engagement with NHS staff have also ensured that Scotland is the only part of the UK to avoid highly disruptive industrial action.

Given the growing demand our health service faces, the NHS requires major reform to ensure that we have a sustainable health service able to deliver the best possible care for patients. I have appreciated your support and encouragement in developing our plans to take these reforms forward. Strong and consistent leadership over the coming year will be necessary to ensure we enhance performance and drive down patients waiting times.

We adhere to Data Protection Legislation in how we process/handle your data/information. If you would like more information on how we process your data, please visit www.michaelmatheson.org or contact us on Tel: 01324629271

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Having requested that the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body review my data roaming charges from last year, I am conscious that this process will conclude in the coming weeks. I have still not received the findings of their review, however, it is in the best interest of myself and the Government for me to now step down to ensure this does not become a distraction to taking forward the Government's agenda.

Throughout my time in office, I have been supported by dedicated civil servants without whom it would be impossible to do my job. I would like to thank them for their guidance and support during my time in Government.

I am enormously grateful to you for appointing me as Health Secretary and for the support that you have given me throughout the last year, it has meant a great deal to both me and my family. Thank you.

You are assured of my full support from the backbenches, as the MSP for Falkirk West, in driving forward our agenda and delivering an independent Scotland. I wish you every success as Scotland's First Minister.

Yours for Scotland,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Matheson".

Michael Matheson MSP

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The First Minister has accepted the resignation and thanked Mr Matheson for his work. This is the second Cabinet Minister to

resign this week – the other, Elena Whitham was previously Drugs and Alcohol Policy Minister resigned due to ill health.

First Minister's letter to Michael Matheson:

“Dear Michael,

“It is with sadness that I accept your resignation from the role of Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health, and Sport.

“It is right that, having requested that the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body review your data roaming charges from last year, that you fully engage with that process as it comes to its conclusion.

“I agree that it is therefore best for you to now step down to ensure you are able to give the Parliamentary process the attention it deserves without it becoming a distraction to taking forward the Government's agenda.

“You have set out some of the highlights of what has been a distinguished career in government. I know that your work in Government will be felt for many years to come. In Net Zero, Transport and Energy, you launched the five-year plan to help build Scotland's hydrogen economy, backed by more than £100 million of funding – an effort that will contribute greatly towards a just transition for Scotland. You also took forward a new Transport Scotland Act to transform Scotland's transport system and ensure it is cleaner and more accessible for the future.

“As Justice Secretary your work on Domestic Abuse, in particular the strengthening of powers to tackle psychological abuse have the changed the lives of people who are in desperate need.

“I know your most recent role as Health Secretary is one that you have given your all. Under your watch a new 10 year Cancer Strategy has been developed and is being implemented,

innovations like Hospital-at-Home are being rolled out further than ever before, and vital support staff like Link Workers have been protected.

“One matter that should not be overlooked is that you secured a fair deal with our NHS Scotland Junior Doctors. Your efforts have ensured that Scotland continues to be the only nation in the UK that has not lost a single day to strike action.

“You have given your country tremendous service in Government, and I know that you will continue to represent the people of Falkirk West with that same energy and dedication.

“I wish you and your family only the very best.

“Yours, for Scotland”

Mr Matheson joined the Scottish Government in 2011 as Minister for Public Health. He was appointed Cabinet Secretary for Justice in 2014, Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity in 2018, Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport in 2021, before being appointed as Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care in March 2023.



Health Secretary Michael Matheson, the First Minister and CEO of Thistle Foundation, Mark Hoolahan, in September 2023 PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter