

John Swinney announces he is running in the SNP leadership contest

John Swinney who admitted he is the longest serving Scottish parliamentarian has announced his candidacy in any contest for the SNP leadership.

He also confirmed that there will be a senior position in his cabinet for his friend and backbench colleague, Kate Forbes, if he is elected. Ms Forbes was not present at the press conference at The Grassmarket Community Project, but many Scottish Ministers were including Màiri McAllan who introduced him to the waiting party members and the press, Angus Robertson, Mairi Gougeon, Jamie Hepburn the minister for independence, Kevin Stewart, Shirley-Anne Somerville, Fiona Hyslop, and several Edinburgh councillors.

The leadership hopeful said that the SNP had much to congratulate themselves.. He said: "I want to build on the work of the SNP Government to create a modern, diverse, dynamic Scotland that will ensure opportunity for all of her citizens. I want to unite the SNP and unite Scotland for independence. One of the benefits of stepping back from frontline politics a year ago is that I have had the time and the opportunity to see our political situation from a different perspective than before. There is a huge amount that the SNP has achieved on behalf of the people of Scotland – and much about which we should feel very very proud."

Mr Swinney countered a challenge over his age by saying that the SNP should “choose at this moment the leader that is right for the moment. That is the question the SNP should answer – Who’s the right leader for this moment? I have been really candid today. My party is not as cohesive as it should be and the central question for the SNP to answer is who is going to bring the SNP back together. And I think the answer to that is John Swinney.”

Kate Forbes has yet to declare whether she will stand or if this will be a coronation in which she will be able to play a part.





Pamela Nash, chief executive of Scotland in Union, said: "John Swinney has started as he means to go on, by putting independence front and centre of his campaign launch. "He wants to 'unite for independence' and absolutely nothing else.

"Scotland desperately needs a change, but in the form of this SNP leadership process we are faced with more division, more grievance and more distraction.

"Like the three previous leaders, John Swinney wants to prioritise the break-up of Britain at the expense of everything else.

"We need a First Minister who takes that off the table and focuses on the people's priorities, not the SNP's."