

# **MSPs vote for UK government to reverse decision on winter fuel payments**

**MSPs at Holyrood are calling on the UK Government to reverse its decision on ending the winter fuel payment for some pensioners.**

Contributing to the debate, which took place during Challenge Poverty Week, the First Minister, John Swinney, said that around 900,000 Scottish pensioners will no longer receive the payment to help with heating costs.

The First Minister said: "More austerity is not the solution to the restrictive fiscal environment in which the UK Government, and governments across the globe, find themselves.

"It is a mistake to think that action to tackle poverty for our most vulnerable citizens are costs to be mitigated. These measures are investments in our people, our communities and our nation's future. I have urged the UK Government to deliver an Autumn Budget that recognises this reality.

"Scotland's Parliament has spoken, and I repeat my call for the UK Government to reverse its damaging decision to restrict entitlement to Winter Fuel Payments for pensioners.

"The Scottish Government will continue to support households with their energy bills and tackle fuel poverty. However the UK Government must ensure their budget in October provides the necessary support to those who need it most."

Scottish Labour leader, Anas Sarwar, said during the debate: “This is a decision that the Labour Government did not want to make, but it is not responsible for the chaos and damage that it inherited from the Tories. Why SNP members, of all people, want to minimise the damage that the Tories have done is for them to explain. I repeat: the decision on the winter fuel payment was not a decision that the chancellor wanted to make. I have always said that I believe that the criterion for support based on pension credit is too tight, and I continue to make that case.

“This year, the winter fuel payment is a devolved payment, which means that we can make different choices. That is why Scottish Labour has laid out a plan to support the most vulnerable people in our society.”

Leader of the Scottish Conservatives, Russell Findlay, said: “My party broadly agrees with Mr Swinney’s motion. However, as with all state benefits, as in life, nothing is truly free. The SNP often does not seem to grasp that fact. Too often, it recklessly wastes taxpayers’ money. However, the removal of this payment is the wrong way to go about introducing any form of means testing. Any change of this nature should have been made much more fairly and respectfully and with a sufficient period of notice. I think that the Labour members actually agree with that. Labour should never have put vulnerable pensioners at risk, as it has with this decision—aided and abetted by the SNP.

“Today’s debate is timely, following the release yesterday of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s “Poverty in Scotland 2024” report. The publication is produced annually, and this year it asks – “how effective social security is at reducing poverty and advancing equality in Scotland.”

“Unlike Mr Swinney’s simplistic one-line motion, the report sets out the complexity of the problem over 100-plus pages. It contains some truly disturbing data that ought to make left-

wing politicians in the Parliament question some of their preconceived ideas.”



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