

Scrap tax hike plans and we'll talk, SNP told ahead of budget

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The Scottish Conservatives have said they will talk “constructively” with the SNP ahead of the budget process, so long as it drops its plan to make Scotland the highest-taxed part of the UK.

Shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said there were serious concerns within the business community about plans to increase tax, something backed up today by the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, who described the plans as “dangerous”.

With the introduction of a large business supplement – as well as council tax increases and a refusal to adopt UK Government income tax threshold changes – the SNP will make Scotland’s workers and businesses pay more tax than anywhere else in Britain.

In contrast, the Scottish Conservatives want rates to be the same and, when possible, lower than in the rest of the UK.

The party has consistently argued that lower taxes would increase the tax base, meaning more receipts for government without hitting people in the pocket.

And with new powers arriving at Holyrood, the performance of Scotland’s economy has never been more pivotal in providing cash for public services.

Stage one of the budget process will take place in Holyrood tomorrow.

Scottish Conservative shadow finance secretary Murdo Fraser said:

“We will talk constructively with the Scottish Government’s about its budget plans – so long as it abandons its bid to make Scotland the highest-taxed part of the UK.

“Derek Mackay needs someone on board to ensure this vital process goes through.

“It’s the most significant budget in Scottish Parliament history, and we don’t believe he should side with other opposition parties in hiking taxes for workers and businesses.

“Instead, he should come round to the idea that by lowering taxes – or at

least keeping them in line with the rest of Britain's – he will boost the tax base, and help the economy in the process.

“And at a time when the economic performance has never been more significant for public services, the Scottish Government has to prioritise growth ahead of left-wing student politics.”