

Sturgeon must spell out what she knew of Ahmed-Sheikh scandal

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17 May 2017



Nicola Sturgeon must end her silence over allegations of financial impropriety involving a senior SNP candidate – and spell out what she knew of the growing scandal.

The Scottish Conservatives are calling on the First Minister to come clean today after it emerged that the party's candidate for Ochil and South Perthshire, Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh, is facing an official probe by the Law Society of Scotland.

It has been reported that the SNP knew about the probe by the Law Society before it was revealed in the press last week.

It also emerged that the SNP ignored a request for information on the allegations last week, and only replied once the deadline for nomination papers for candidates had passed.

By that point, Mrs Ahmed-Sheikh had been confirmed as the SNP candidate for Ochil and South Perthshire.

Scottish Conservative MSP Murdo Fraser said:

"This whole episode stinks.

"It's quite clear that the SNP should withdraw all support from Mrs Ahmed-Sheikh in this election.

"However, there are now growing questions over the way Nicola Sturgeon handled this matter.

"Was the First Minister told about the investigation facing Mrs Ahmed-Sheikh? If so, why did she allow her to carry on as a candidate?

"And why did the SNP try to hide the facts of this matter last week when there was still time to replace Mrs Ahmed-Sheikh with another candidate?

"Everything here points to an official SNP cover-up going straight to Nicola Sturgeon's door. She thought she could brush this affair under the carpet.

"The SNP must now come clean. A failure to do so will demonstrate once again

that they are trying to take the voters of Scotland for a ride.”

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A vote for Labour would be a vote for chaos and division, the Scottish Conservatives have warned, after a damning analysis showed Kezia Dugdale’s party is split down the middle over support for Jeremy Corbyn.

A dossier released today by the Scottish Conservatives – entitled ‘The Division of Labour’ – has revealed that four in ten Scottish candidates have condemned Mr Corbyn’s leadership on social media or in other public statements.

Scottish Labour candidates have said of Mr Corbyn: “He is utterly unfit to lead,” “he is destroying the party,” “Corbyn is no leader,” and “Corbyn must go.”

Yet their views are contradicted by the hard-left majority in the Scottish party who stand by Mr Corbyn’s plan to tax and spend billions more.

One supportive candidate has said: “Kezia Dugdale needs to develop as an authentic leader and learn from Jeremy.”

Scottish Conservative MSP Adam Tomkins said:

“Labour are the most divided party ever to face the electorate in Scotland.

“A vote for Labour would be a vote for chaos as the party tears itself apart and descends deeper into division.

“Even for people who have been sympathetic to Labour in the past, that is a disastrous prospect.

“We know Jeremy Corbyn is “absolutely fine” with a second independence referendum and would strike a deal with the SNP in an instant if that’s what he had to do to form a government.

“More than half of Scottish Labour’s candidates are ardent Corbynistas who

would happily go along with anything he says.

“Only the Scottish Conservatives are strong enough to stand up to the SNP and say No to a second independence referendum.

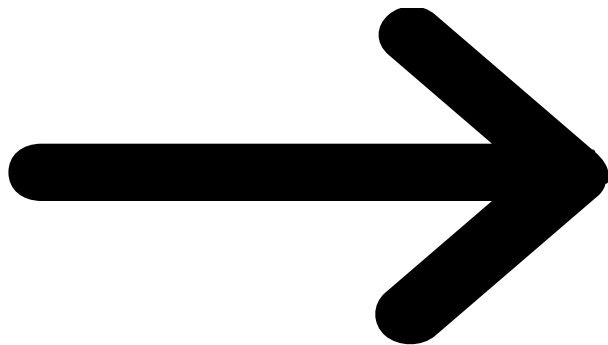
“We are absolutely united in our staunch opposition to Nicola Sturgeon’s demand for a damaging and divisive vote on breaking away from the UK.”

The Scottish Conservative analysis, The Division of Labour, is here ([link](#)).

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15 May 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have accused Nicola Sturgeon of “playing political games” with Brexit.

The SNP leader said she wanted the Scottish Government to be “at the top table in Brexit negotiations.”

At the same time, she said she wanted to strengthen her hand as she seeks to impose a second, unwanted independence referendum on Scotland.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw said:

“The only conclusion to be reached from this is that Nicola Sturgeon has now gone entirely through the looking glass.

“Let’s be clear about what she says she now wants.

“She says she wants to decide how Brexit is designed for the whole of the UK – even though SNP Ministers want that deal to fail.

“At the same time, she also wants to impose an independence referendum campaign on Scotland to try and split the UK in two.

“It is a ridiculous position to take.

“The SNP is in a complete shambles on independence and Europe, and the cracks are now beginning to show.

“Nicola Sturgeon should stop the political games, drop her plan for an unwanted second referendum and seek to make Brexit work for all of us.

“If re-elected, a Conservative UK Government will get on with the job of delivering the best Brexit deal for all of us in the UK, including Scotland.”

Giving evidence to a Holyrood committee last week, Nicola Sturgeon’s Brexit minister, Michael Russell, predicted talks to leave the EU would fail, paving the way for independence.

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15 May 2017



A former Liberal Democrat councillor in Scotland’s capital city has backed the Conservatives, adding “something of a revolution” is building under leader Ruth Davidson.

Alastair Shields, who represented the Lib Dems in Edinburgh’s Almond ward last term, said he would now campaign for the Scottish Conservatives in Edinburgh West.

He said the party was “ticking both boxes” when it came to respecting the results of the independence and EU referendums, and “fighting hardest for the centre ground”.

Mr Shields is the latest former Labour or Liberal Democrat member to switch to the Scottish Conservatives ahead of next month’s election.

Pledging to get his “canvassing shoes on”, he said:

“In Edinburgh West, the Scottish Conservatives appeal to the electorate because they spend more time talking about their own campaign pledges and the potential of their candidates.

“They put across a simple message: we will deliver, vote for us.

“It feels like something of a revolution is developing in Scotland. Ruth Davidson puts people and communities at the top of the agenda, leaving talk of independence behind. We’ve had that discussion and the Scottish people rejected it. Let’s move on.”

Scottish Conservative Edinburgh West candidate Sandy Batho said:

“Alastair is one of many former Labour and Lib Dem members switching their support to the Scottish Conservatives.

“That’s because people want to see a party which will fight the SNP in standing up for Scotland’s place in the UK, and respect last year’s Brexit vote too.

“All over the country the party is making strides, and it’s abundantly clear we are the only ones capable of standing up to the SNP and its divisive drive for another independence referendum.”

Below are Mr Shields’ remarks in full:

“For me, this election is mostly about which party is fighting hardest for the centre ground and upholding democracy at a time where it constantly appears to be challenged. Right now, the Conservatives are ticking both of these boxes leaps and bounds above the others.”

“I’m not a Brexiteer, I voted Remain. I don’t think anyone in the country is under any doubt the process will be tough in the years ahead and so much is still unknown. But I appreciate that leaving the EU was the greater choice of the British people and that must be respected. I accept Brexit and believe the Conservatives, under the leadership of Theresa May, stand to represent many people across the country with the same mindset.”

“In Edinburgh West, the Scottish Conservatives appeal to the electorate because they spend more time talking about their own campaign pledges and the potential of their candidates. They put across a simple message: We will deliver, vote for us.”

"I am looking forward to getting my canvassing shoes on for the Conservatives during this campaign. I last helped them as a student and it feels like something of a revolution is developing in Scotland."

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15 May 2017



The First Minister has today admitted that education standards are falling under the SNP, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

In an interview on the BBC Andrew Marr show, Nicola Sturgeon said she was "not denying" that levels of literacy and numeracy were on the decline in Scotland.

The SNP leader also said she is holding to her promise to be judged on her record on education, and pledged improvements by the next parliament in 2021.

The latest Scottish Survey for Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN) showed a rise in the percentage of pupils who are functionally illiterate from 7% to 16% in the last four years.

Fewer than half of S2 pupils in Scotland were performing well in writing, down from 64% in 2012.

The figures also showed that Scotland's attainment gap continues to exist, with pupils from the least deprived areas outperforming those from the most deprived areas at all stages – with the gap similar to that seen in 2012.

Scottish Conservative education spokeswoman Liz Smith MSP said:

"Today's response from the First Minister that she is 'not denying' collapsing standards in literacy and numeracy is a tacit admission of failure.

"The recent SSLN statistics made it clear that the SNP government is not doing enough to address the problems in basic literacy.

"There also remains a persistent gap between pupils from the most deprived areas and the least deprived areas.

"After ten years of SNP control over Scottish education, it is simply not good enough for Nicola Sturgeon to say that improvements will be made by 2021.

"Scottish children cannot afford to wait until the next parliament for things to get better.

"It is time for the SNP to put its obsession with independence to one side and get on with tackling its supposed top priority of improving education."