

Emails

From: Nicola Sturgeon
Date: 6 February 2020 at 08:50:19 GMT
To: elizabeth.lloyd@gov.scot@gov.scot
Subject: Re: Draft statement

Amended below. I'll need printed copy

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On 6 Feb 2020, at 08:35, "elizabeth.lloyd@gov.scot wrote:

Presiding Officer

Before I take questions, I'd like to make a short statement.

Members will be aware that I have accepted the resignation of Derek MacKay as Finance Secretary.

Derek Mackay has apologised unreservedly for his conduct and recognised that it falls below the standard required of a minister, and I agree.

However, I wanted to formally confirm to Parliament that the government will proceed, as planned, with the Scottish budget this afternoon. It will be delivered by the Minister for Public Finance Kate Forbes and will set out our plans to sustainably grow our economy, support our public services and step up our action to tackle the climate emergency. All of that will continue to be my government's focus.

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From: elizabeth.lloyd@gov.scot
Sent: Friday, February 7, 2020 3:25:01 PM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP
Subject: FW: Transcript request [ref:_00D205u20._5004G26yb5Q:ref]

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Programme(s)	BBC Radio 4 Today
Date & time	Friday 07 February 2020 07.36
Subject/Interviewee	Interview – John Swinney
Duration	4.50

Mishal Husain, presenter: He joins us on the line now.

Good morning, Mr Swinney.

John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister: Good morning.

MH: *Should Derek Mackay remain an MSP?*

JS: That's obviously an issue for Derek Mackay. The SNP has no control over that element of the issue. Derek Mackay is elected in his personal capacity and it is for him to make a judgment on that.

MH: *You must have a view on that.*

JS: We're involved in a process now of undertaking disciplinary investigation within the SNP. That process is underway. We need to be very careful how we go about that process, because obviously we've suspended Derek Mackay's membership of the party and of the parliamentary group. We need to allow due process to take its course, and then once we get to the end of that due process, we will all be able to see what we think about what should happen next.

MH: *How long is that process going to take?*

JS: I think it will be a process that will be done efficiently and swiftly to make sure that the issues—

MH: *Weeks? Months?*

JS: I think it would be of an order of weeks, I would think. It's important that we undertake that process properly. We've acted very swiftly on when we became aware of these allegations. We

became aware of them on Wednesday evening, and Derek Mackay resigned, and we have got to – we had to address those issues, because his conduct was unacceptable, and—

MH: *Did you consider sacking him on Wednesday evening?*

JS: Well, he resigned before anybody could think about whether he should be sacked or not, because of the gravity of the issues involved, and that was the right thing to do. His conduct, which—

MH: *He resigned on Wednesday morning, and you became aware of all of this on Wednesday night, so there was time to take action as a party, if you'd wanted to.*

JS: What we wanted to make sure was that we saw all the details that were involved. We saw the details as they unfolded on Thursday morning, and with the benefit of that full detail, Derek Mackay had resigned, and we removed the party whip, and we suspended him from party membership, so within a space of 12 hours between us becoming... first receiving a media enquiry about this and Derek Mackay's resignation was the amount of time that elapsed. So, we've acted very swiftly because the issues were unacceptable, the conduct was unacceptable, and we had to address it in that fashion.

MH: *He described his behaviour as foolish and apologised for it. But if you send messages to a 16-year-old saying, 'I think you're really cute', is that more than foolish? Is it predatory?*

JS: It's certainly completely unacceptable. I think it sounds predatory and, for me, it's conduct that is completely indefensible. So that's why we acted so swiftly because the issues were of the gravity that they became clear to us in the course of Wednesday night and Thursday morning.

MH: *As I said, it happened on the day of the budget, a budget in which more money was pledged to your department, to education. It is clear, though, the extent of the problem that is being recorded through the PISA results, the international survey that's taking place. The results that came out in December for Scotland showed the worst performance in science and maths since the survey was first held for Scotland almost 20 years ago. What do you think is going wrong?*

JS: What the PISA results show us is a very significant improvement in the performance in reading in Scotland. There are only five countries in the world that are discernibly stronger in reading in the PISA analysis than Scotland. And on science on maths, what the PISA results showed was a consistent performance in Scotland with the last survey, and on the OECD average. Now, that's not good enough. And what we've invested in is improving literacy and numeracy within Scottish education. We've set out proposals to invest in the STEM subjects as well...

MH: *It sounds like you've done better on literacy than numeracy, though, doesn't it? That would be suggested by this.*

JS: That is correct, Mishal, and one of the explanations for that is that as the first priority in our attainment activity, to improve attainment in Scottish education four years ago, we concentrated on literacy and we've now seen the rewards of that in the PISA analysis. Now, we've concentrated on numeracy now as the second part of that attainment challenge, and on STEM, and I expect in the years to come to see that improve in performance.

MH: *But you should have been able to improve both, shouldn't you. It shouldn't have been the case that focusing on one sees the other continue to slide.*

JS: Well, the performance in maths and science is consistent with the last time the PISA survey was undertaken, and on literacy, we've seen a very significant improvement in Scotland's performance, so with the investment that we are making and the enhancements to learning and teaching that are being undertaken, I'm very confident that we'll make similar improvements in the years to come.

MH: *John Swinney, Deputy First Minister and Education Secretary. Thank you.*

Ends

From: elizabeth.lloyd@gov.scot

Sent: Friday, February 7, 2020 3:25:28 PM

To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP

Subject: FW: Transcript request [ref:_00D205u20._5004G26yb5Q:ref]

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Programme(s)	BBC Radio Scotland Good Morning Scotland
Date & time	Friday 07 February 2020 08.07
Subject/Interviewee	Interview – John Swinney
Duration	10.40

Gillian Marles, presenter: *Deputy First Minister John Swinney, good morning to you.*

John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister: Good morning, Gillian.

GM: *We will talk about the budget, but before that, Derek Mackay, what was your reaction when you heard or saw those revelations yesterday?*

JS: I was utterly stunned by the information that I became aware of on Wednesday evening. I judged, as the First Minister did, that the conduct that was displayed was completely unacceptable, and we had no alternative but for Derek Mackay to leave the Government.

GM: *This was a complete surprise, was it, because there are further revelations in the papers this morning suggesting that this might not be an isolated incident, or there is some kind of pattern here?*

JS: It was the first time that I had heard any revelations of this type, and as a consequence of the fact that they were wholly and completely unacceptable, we had to take the action that we took.

GM: *You had concerns then – you said “of this type”, you had concerns about other behaviour then, did you, that The Herald today is saying that he was banned from drinking at conferences because somebody said he enjoyed energetic evenings in nightclubs?*

JS: I'm simply saying that we had an allegation put to us on Wednesday night which was completely unacceptable, and we had to act on that, because it was so unacceptable, and that's the correct action for the Government to take to ensure that issues that are brought to our attention are dealt with swiftly, effectively, and appropriately given the fact that the conduct is not acceptable.

GM: *I was just asking you, though, did you have concerns about his other behaviours, though?*

JS: No, I didn't. No.

GM: *Should he remain as an MSP?*

JS: We're involved in a disciplinary process now. We took action right away for Derek Mackay to leave the Government. We suspended him from party membership and removed the party whip, and we now commence a disciplinary process. Now, that... I think everybody understands that there has to be a due process that is undertaken. That is what we will now do as a party, and the issues of the type that you raise with me are issues that will flow from that disciplinary process, which we will now undertake.

GM: *Yeah, I know, but it seems pretty clear of what's happened. Because he's resigned, he seems to accept these allegations. Is he the type of person you would like in the SNP?*

JS: Well, we've got a disciplinary process to go through, Gillian, and I don't want to see anything that's going to prejudice that disciplinary process. I have to be very careful about how I go about that, because we have to make sure that due process is followed, and the issues that you raise with me are issues that will flow from that disciplinary process, and obviously, the decision that was taken to remove the party whip, to suspend Derek Mackay from membership, makes it very clear that we view this conduct to be completely and utterly unacceptable, and that's why we've acted so decisively.

GM: *Are you comfortable with how your party handled these allegations and this story? It seems that – well, The Sun is saying that went into media lawyer style mode with putting lots of hurdles to try and stop this story. Murdo Fraser saying, "All the energy went into covering up this story", demanding the name of the 16-year-old.*

JS: I think if we just pause and look at the sequence of events, the Government became aware of these allegations about six o'clock on Wednesday night, and we simply – because of the significance of what was being put to us, we simply asked for information to give us the veracity and the substance of the points that were input to us. We saw nothing in writing until we saw the first edition of *The Sun* later on, on Wednesday evening. So, we were simply asking for the detail that we'd ask in any situation where allegations had been put to us, so that we can be confident about the detail that has been asked. When we became aware of that, the action was taken very decisively, and Derek Mackay resigned on Wednesday evening, the announcement was made on Thursday morning, the whip was removed from his when we saw the full details in *The Sun* newspaper printed in their edition on Thursday morning. So, I don't think anybody, even our worst critics, could say that the Government was in any way slow in handling this. This was done decisively on a day of enormous significance, because what we had to also prepare for was for an outstanding young woman, Kate Forbes, to then move in to deliver the Government's budget, which of course she'd been intimately involved in preparing, and she did it magnificently, demonstrating the depth of talent of Kate Forbes and the depth of talent within the Scottish National Party, and we are immensely proud of how Kate Forbes handled the statement and the questions that she answered.

GM: *Well, let's move onto that budget. Some have described it as a bit underwhelming, and I'm sure you would disagree. How would you describe that budget? I mean, people do agree across the political divide that she did do a very good job.*

JS: Well, the budget was a very strong budget and it was magnificently delivered by Kate Forbes and she not only delivered the statement magnificently, with authority and with credibility, she then demolished the opponents that put forward alternative arguments, and I heard one of them on the radio earlier on this morning. This is a budget which is about investing in our economy, about taking decisive action in tackling climate change, of investing in our public services and taking all measures that we can to deal with the uncertainties in the economic environment over Brexit, so there's a lot of very, very strong investment announced yesterday that will strengthen Scotland's future.

GM: *Well, you had additional spending, didn't you, thanks to the U.K. government and the Barnett consequential. You had an extra, around £1.1 billion.*

JS: Well, let's remember, Gillian, that we're still wrestling with the impact of austerity. The Scottish Government's budget is still lower in real terms than it was when the Conservatives came to power in 2010, so we've had a decade of austerity that we are still having to address the consequences of. Now, yesterday, we took decisive action to tackle the issue of child poverty, by setting out the proposals for the first payments of the Scottish child payment, which will lift 30,000 children out of poverty within Scotland. That's the type of action where the Scottish Government is picking up the pieces of the wreckage of austerity from the U.K. government.

GM: *Except the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, although – accepting that poverty rates are lower in Scotland – warns things are getting worse and did say that the budget did nothing to address that. Particularly no commitment at all to continue the investment in affordable housing. Will you do that?*

JS: Yes, well, Kate Forbes announced continued investment in affordable housing, because we recognise that to be so central to the creation of good quality living accommodation for families around the country. But we've also invested in the Scottish child payment, with sustained investment in the attainment challenge, to close the poverty-related attainment gap. There was also investment to make sure that we had in place all of the support necessary to assist families in meeting the challenges

that they are facing, so what the Government is trying to do is to build the foundations of dealing with austerity, the rising poverty inflicted by welfare reform in the U.K. government, and to give Scottish families the support that they require.

GM: *If you earn more, though, in Scotland, you would be better off, wouldn't you, living in England because there was no change to the income tax bands. But as people are getting paid more, more, a third more according to some assessments, Scots are liable for higher additional rates, so if you're earning £50,000 in Scotland, you would be paying £1,500 more in income tax, so you would be better off living in England, wouldn't you?*

JS: The majority of taxpayers in Scotland will pay less tax than people earning the same income elsewhere in the United Kingdom. And, of course, what you've also got to take into account is what are people getting for their tax rates in Scotland, and what people in Scotland are getting are no tuition fees for their children and young people if they go to university, free personal care for the elderly. They're getting concessionary travel. They're getting other measures which are supporting families. They are getting free school meals for primary one to three children and they're not paying prescription charges in Scotland.

So, there are many things that we do, many policy commitments we offer which are strong policy commitments to support people's incomes. We ask a small number of people in Scotland to pay slightly more in taxation, in fair taxation to invest in the public services that create such a quality of life in Scotland.

GM: *Except local councils are not getting what they wanted. They say they are getting £95 million less. Murdo Fraser is saying, 'well, that will mean they'll have to cut school crossing patrols, classroom assistance', so people will not get the same level of service, will they, because local authorities are not getting the money that they say they need to manage their commitments.*

JS: Murdo Fraser and the Conservatives have zero credibility on the budget, because they come along arguing for tax cuts. They represent a party that supports austerity, and they want us to spend more money. Now, that doesn't add up, so there's no credibility in their position. Local government has been given a real terms increase in its budget, nearly £500 million of additional expenditure allocated to local authorities, and we will see the rollout in the course of this year of 1,140 hours of early learning and childcare for eligible two-year-olds, for all three and four-year-olds. That will be another major boost to the quality of education and the great start for children in Scottish society.

GM: *You're not going to get this budget through without moving in some way, are you, so you're going to have to compromise somehow.*

JS: We're always open to compromise and our track record as a government of working with others to get our budget proposals through and that's exactly what will be taken forward by the Government in the weeks to come.

GM: *So, you're open to discussions with all parties then, even the Tories who you say have no credibility.*

JS: Certainly, they will have no credibility if they come along and say, 'we want to perpetuate austerity, we don't want any changes to tax and we want you to spend more money', because that just can't be done arithmetically, so we'll have discussions with other political parties, but they have to be on the basis that we have allocated the resources that are available to us, and if other parties want to change the way we've allocated those resources, they have to be very clear with us about where the money is going to come from, and that's a very simple ask that we make of other political parties, because we've done the very heavy lifting to put together a tough budget that's been difficult to resolve, which invests in Scotland's future, and we ask for others to approach it in the same fashion.

GM: *Thank you for joining us.*

Ends