



The Scottish Parliament Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Parliamentary Year 4, No. 15, Session 6

Meeting of the Parliament

Thursday 13 June 2024

Note: (DT) signifies a decision taken at Decision Time.

The meeting opened at 11.40 am.

- 1. General Questions:** Questions were answered by Cabinet Secretaries and a Minister.
- 2. First Minister's Questions:** Questions were answered by the First Minister (John Swinney).
- 3. Fostering a Discussion on a Kindergarten Stage in Scotland:** The Parliament debated S6M-12369 in the name of Fulton MacGregor—That the Parliament acknowledges the body of international evidence on the reported benefits of play-based early years education; believes that active, social play is a natural learning drive that helps develop physical fitness, social skills, cognitive capacities and personal qualities; understands that Scotland and the rest of the UK are outliers in Europe in starting formal education at four or five years of age; considers that, since the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) comparisons began, countries with later school starting ages have performed better than those with earlier starts; understands that the UN defines early childhood as being from birth to eight years of age, and that Scottish research has established that there are significant differences in children's levels of development at age five; commends the work of organisations such as Upstart Scotland in promoting the needs of children in early years education based on relationship-centred, child-led, play-based environments, with a greater focus on outdoor learning; notes the belief that a universal play-based kindergarten stage, with a raised formal school starting age, could contribute to closing the attainment gap and be a significant anti-poverty measure, and that it would help provide a true level playing field for all of Scotland's

children, including those in the Coatbridge and Chryston constituency, giving every child time to develop the skills and capacities that underpin educational success, improving long-term outcomes and giving every child the best start in life, and further notes the belief that there is a need for a national conversation on early years education to consider a later school starting age preceded by a relationship-centred, play-based kindergarten stage to support optimal development during early childhood and ensure secure foundations, and that such a conversation should be open to all who wish to contribute, including early years practitioners, parents, teachers, academics and children, as well as policy makers.

4. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Questions: Questions were answered by members of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.

5. Portfolio Questions: Questions on Net Zero and Energy, and Transport were answered by a Cabinet Secretary.

6. Ministerial Statement: The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic (Kate Forbes) made a statement and answered questions on European Structural and Investment Funds.

7. Scottish Government Priorities: Investing in Scotland's Public Services: The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government (Shona Robison) moved S6M-13602—That the Parliament welcomes the Scottish Government's continued investment in public services and shares its commitment to maintaining high-quality services that people in Scotland need; recognises the key role that the workforce plays in delivering public services and welcomes that public sector pay is higher in Scotland than other parts of the UK; acknowledges the importance of a socially just and progressive approach to public service design and delivery, underpinned by fair work and a progressive tax policy; agrees that the UK Spring Budget fell far short of what Scotland needs to deliver further investment in public services and infrastructure, and will result in a cut in the Scottish core block grant of around £0.4 billion in real terms in 2024-25 compared with 2022-23; is concerned that significant, real-terms spending cuts, assessed by the Institute for Fiscal Studies as being up to £20 billion by 2028 across the UK, will be needed as a result of the economic plans of either a Labour or Conservative UK administration; calls on the incoming UK administration to bring forward an emergency budget to restore the £1.3 billion cut in Scotland's capital budget, and notes that, for as long as the Scottish Government remains on a fixed budget under the current devolution settlement, there are limits to what it can achieve in terms of investment in public services.

Liz Smith moved amendment S6M-13602.1—

As an amendment to motion S6M-13602 in the name of Shona Robison (Scottish Government Priorities: Investing in Scotland's Public Services), leave out from "acknowledges" to end and insert "notes that, in so many areas of devolved public services in Scotland such as education, health, local government, housing and justice, there has been a marked deterioration in the services provided over the last 17 years; acknowledges that Scotland is now the most highly taxed part of the UK and that people are paying more yet getting less from their public services; is concerned that, despite the Scottish

Government receiving a record block grant, the failure of the New Deal for Business and the Scottish Government's lack of emphasis on economic growth have contributed to a very challenging fiscal environment, and calls on the Scottish Government to put in place economic policies that will reform the public sector, improve skills and training, reduce the tax burden and foster new investment and growth opportunities across the economy."

After debate, the amendment was disagreed to ((DT) by division: For 24, Against 81 (including 1 proxy vote), Abstentions 0).

Mark Griffin moved amendment S6M-13602.2—

As an amendment to motion S6M-13602 in the name of Shona Robison (Scottish Government Priorities: Investing in Scotland's Public Services), leave out from first "welcomes" to end and insert "recognises that communities across Scotland are being failed by the Scottish National Party (SNP) administration's approach to reform and funding of Scotland's public services; notes that there are significant issues across Scotland's vital public services, including in the NHS, education, local government and housing, and that these issues are having a real impact on inequality; understands that the SNP has consistently failed to deliver the reform that Scotland's public services have desperately needed over the last 17 years; recognises that funding for local authorities has been cut by a cumulative total of over £6 billion since 2014, resulting in local authorities across Scotland being forced to make difficult decisions on the provision of essential services in order to make ends meet; understands that the NHS is particularly impacted by the SNP's failure to deliver reform, with £1.3 billion spent on delayed discharge since the Scottish Government committed to eradicate it, and millions spent every year on agency staff; recognises the invaluable contribution of Scotland's public sector workers, who deliver the services that people rely on in challenging circumstances; believes that improving the terms and conditions of workers across the public sector is essential, especially in areas such as social care; understands that financial mismanagement and a failure to deliver economic growth has resulted in less money being generated for investment in public services; recognises the role that technology can play in improving public services, and calls on the Scottish Government to prioritise economic growth to boost wages and create jobs in all parts of Scotland, as well as financial competence and transparency to ensure that all taxpayer money is used effectively and towards delivering the support and reform that Scotland's public services desperately need."

After debate, the amendment was disagreed to ((DT) by division: For 45 (including 1 proxy vote), Against 61, Abstentions 0).

The motion was agreed to ((DT) by division: For 61, Against 46 (including 1 proxy vote), Abstentions 0).

8. Decision Time: The Parliament took a decision on item 7 as noted above.

The meeting closed at 5.10 pm.

David McGill
Clerk of the Parliament
13 June 2024

Appendix

(Note: this Appendix does not form part of the Minutes)

Other Documents

The following document was laid before the Parliament on 13 June 2024 and is not subject to parliamentary procedure—

Scotland's Census 2022 - UK Armed Forces veterans (SG/2024/117) laid under Section 4(1) of the Census Act 1920

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