

## We continue to invest more in our public services and economic growth.

In government the SNP is investing in Scotland's public services. GERS shows that the Scottish Government is investing £93 more per head than the UK Government on health, and £133 more on education.

The SNP Scottish Government is also investing more in economic growth. Spending on economic development in Scotland is higher than the UK as a whole – to the tune of £110 per head. And, when it comes to capital investment, which accounts for spending on public infrastructure like

hospitals and schools, spending is £310 higher per head in Scotland than in the UK as a whole.

**The UK Government must act to support the North Sea oil and gas industry.** The oil and gas industry makes a huge contribution to the economy of both the UK and Scotland. Over the years the industry has generated over £300 billion for the Treasury.

In challenging times, the SNP Scottish Government is doing all that it can to support the industry - establishing the Energy Jobs Taskforce and investing £379 million in infrastructure. Earlier this year the Scottish Government also announced a £12 million boost to support individuals to retrain for specialist roles in the sector, and £12.5 million funding for innovation, research and development too. This commitment needs to be matched by the UK Government. That's why, ahead of the Chancellor's budget next week, we're calling for immediate action to support the industry, including:

- A substantial reduction in the headline rate of tax;
- Removal of barriers to exploration and enhanced oil recovery;
- Tax relief on decommissioning;
- And, other support such as government loan guarantees.

**The biggest risk to public spending in Scotland is the UK Government.** Since 2010, the UK Government has cut Scotland's budget by £2.4 billion – and they plan to make a further £1.3 billion cuts by 2020.

The devastating impact of Tory austerity is clear. The Institute for Fiscal Studies estimates that the UK Government's welfare reforms alone could push an extra 100,000 children into poverty by 2020.

The SNP – in Holyrood and Westminster – has consistently argued for an alternative to the UK's approach to public expenditure and that's what we'll continue to do.

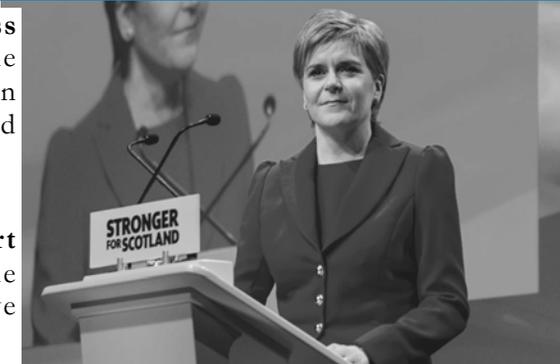
**GERS tells us about the status quo and very little about the opportunities of independence.** Scotland is rich in human talent and natural resources. But what we lack are the economic levers to maximise growth in our economy, and invest according to our own priorities.

Even after the Smith Commission powers are fully implemented, 71 per cent of taxes raised in Scotland will be controlled in Westminster. And, our ability With independence, the Scottish Government could design policies that are tailored to Scotland's – not the UK Government's – circumstances.

**Nicola Sturgeon gave her address to the SNP Spring Conference** – the biggest ever SNP pre-election conference. The speech was packed with announcements.

Here's what you need to know.

**A new initiative to build support for independence** This summer the SNP will embark on a new initiative to build support for independence.



Nicola outlined the next steps to build a strong majority for independence – to hear and address the concerns of those who weren't convinced to vote for independence in 2014. That is how the 45 per cent of September 2014 will be turned into resounding yes vote.

Judging by an online poll carried out by Riddle ([www.riddle.com/a/56875](http://www.riddle.com/a/56875)) for the Sunday Post the 60% target set by Nicola a few months ago is achievable, and in a relatively short timescale too.

Would you have liked Scotland to be an independent country on March 24th?



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**Screenshot taken 22 March at 2pm**

polls have shown that support for Independence is on the rise but is nowhere near the 60% support that the SNP have said is needed for Indyref2.

More people are realising that we were lied to through the 2014 Referendum and all the threats made by the No campaign of what would happen if we voted Yes are happening now, we are not an equal partner in this Union as the treatment of our MPs is proving. The incessant putting down of Scotland by the media and the fear agenda they pedal on a daily basis is having an opposite effect to what they want as people are seeing it for what it is. Westminster is no longer hiding its disdain for Scotland, the BBC appear to be openly bias (see *Dundee Question Time*) but the Scottish electorate aren't falling for it a second time.

As you can see from the image on the left, from on Tuesday 22st March, **88%** or 10,500 from 11931 people who voted in the poll said they would have liked Scotland to have been an Independent country this coming Thursday.

In the interests of fairness, not being a part of the No voters online community I can't say how large or active that group are. I can say however, that groups such as SNPout and Scotland in Union will have targeted this poll much the same way as many of us in the Yes Movement will have done.

Regardless of that the poll is encouraging and gives us something to build on. Other

Other announcements included;

**New funding for low income families to give every child the best start in life** Right now, low income families can qualify for the Sure Start Maternity Grant, a payment of £500 on the birth of a child to help meet the essential costs of looking after a new born. An SNP Scottish Government will use new powers coming to the Scottish Parliament to replace the Sure Start Maternity Grant with an expanded Maternity and Early Years Allowance. We will:

- Increase the payment for the birth of a first child, from £500 to £600;
- restore payments for second and subsequent children – cut by the Coalition Government in 2010 – of £300;
- and, introduce payments of £250 for low-income families at other stages in children's lives – when they begin nursery and again when they start school.

**Extend free meals to 2,3,and 4yr olds in nursery** The SNP has already delivered free school meals for primaries1to3, benefitting 135,000 children across Scotland and saving families around £380 a year for each child. If re-elected, when we expand early years education to include full day provision, we will also extend free meals will be extended to 2,3 & 4yr olds in our nurseries.

**An extra £750 million to raise attainment of the most disadvantaged young people** The Scottish Attainment Fund – introduced by the SNP in government – is helping to improve literacy and numeracy in over 300 primary schools in Scotland's most deprived communities.

An extra £100 million in funding raised by progressive changes to council tax will see the reach of the Scottish Attainment Fund extended to every part of Scotland. Funding will go directly to head teachers, enabling them to invest in extra teachers, classroom assistants, equipment and additional learning support.

**Increased NHS funding every year in the next parliament** Under the SNP funding for Scotland's NHS is at record levels – now £13 billion. If re-elected an SNP government will continue to increase the NHS resource budget in real terms every year of the next parliament.

**An additional £50 million for cancer treatment** If re-elected in May an SNP Scottish Government will invest an extra £50 million to help more people beat cancer, with new state-of-the-art radiotherapy equipment and an extra 100 radiotherapy specialists.

**Superfast digital broadband for every community in Scotland** The Scottish Government's current Digital Scotland programme will deliver broadband to 95 per cent of premises across Scotland by the end of 2017. The remaining 5 per cent will be in some of the hardest to reach areas of rural and remote Scotland.

If re-elected an SNP government will make sure no community is left behind. Over the next Parliament superfast digital broadband will be delivered to all premises across Scotland.

**Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland (GERS)** for the year 2014-15. GERS is produced annually and provides estimates of total public spending in Scotland, as well as tax receipts for the previous five years.

It has to be remembered that this is for Scotland within the UK and assumes that an Independent Scotland will follow the same reckless mismanagement of our country as the UK has done for past 308yrs.

**Scotland's onshore economy has grown by over £6 billion in the past five years.** GERS for 2014-15 shows that Scotland's onshore economy continues to do well. Onshore tax receipts – excluding North Sea revenues – have grown at about the same rate as the UK as a whole – and are up by £6 billion since 2010-11.

The publication shows a decline in North Sea revenues in 2014-15. This reflects the fact that oil prices remain lower than virtually all forecasters – including the UK Government – previously predicted. This highlights the challenges that continue to face the global oil industry today, which Scotland is not immune to. While the Scottish Government is doing all it can to mitigate the impact on the North Sea, it is clear that immediate action is required from the UK Government. You can read more on this below.

When North Sea revenues are included, tax receipts per person in Scotland remain broadly in line with the UK as a whole – at around £10,000 per person. And, since devolution, Scotland has contributed an average of around £700 per person per year more in tax than the UK as a whole.

**In challenging economic circumstances, Scotland's economy remains strong.**

- Our economy continues to grow – with three years of continuous growth up to the third quarter of 2015.
- Our employment rate – now at a record high – is higher than the UK as a whole.
- Typical pay in Scotland is now, for the first time ever, higher than in England.
- Of all the 12 nations and regions in the UK, Scotland's output per head – even without North Sea revenues – is the third highest.
- Since 2006, the Ernst & Young Attractiveness Survey ranked Scotland in the top two locations in the UK outside of London for attracting inward investment.
- Scotland's international exports increased by 36 per cent between 2007 and 2014 – from £20.3 billion to £27.5billion.
- Since 2007 Scotland's growth in productivity – at 4.4 per cent – has outstripped that of the UK which is at 0.2 per cent.

to grow our population – and our tax base – is limited by the UK Government too.

The very first GERS report was published in 1992. Its purpose was to estimate the general government borrowing requirement for Scotland, or, as GERS put it, Scotland's "fiscal deficit". This is the difference between the amount of expenditure undertaken by government on behalf of the people of Scotland, and the tax and other public revenues attributable to Scotland.

The motivation for producing the initial GERS was political. GERS had been commissioned by the Conservative Secretary of State for Scotland, Ian Lang: and this is what he said about it, in a leaked memorandum to John Major:

*"I judge that it is just what is needed at present in our campaign to maintain the initiative and undermine the other parties. This initiative could score against all of them."*