# Douglas Ross criticised for missing Holyrood education summit in Turks and Caicos



Douglas Ross, the former leader of the Scottish Conservatives and current convener of the Education Committee in Holyrood, is under scrutiny for choosing to attend a seminar in the Turks and Caicos Islands instead of participating in a significant education summit in Scotland. This decision has sparked criticism and has raised questions about his commitment to his role as a Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP).

While Ross is scheduled to attend the Holyrood session virtually, critics have pointed out the irony of his absence, particularly given his recent harsh critique of Education Secretary Jenny Gilruth for her failure to attend other parliamentary meetings. In a previous session, Ross condemned Gilruth for what he perceived as a lack of respect towards educators and students, demanding an apology for her absence during a council by-election campaign. This situation presents an intriguing contrast to his own priorities, as he is now 4,000 miles away in a tropical locale, participating in an “election observation mission” alongside a “post-election seminar.”

The weather in the Turks and Caicos is anticipated to reach a balmy 30 degrees Celsius, drawing attention to the allure of the islands, known for their stunning beaches and marine environment. This backdrop has not gone unnoticed by political rivals, who have been vocal regarding Ross’s decision to represent his constituents from such a distance. An SNP source described his actions as indicative of a broader pattern where Ross treats his responsibilities as a part-time gig, stating that this week has been particularly embarrassing for him given recent incidences of poor behaviour in the Holyrood chamber.

Historically, Ross’s attendance record in parliament has been contentious, leading to further scrutiny of his commitment to his duties as an MSP. He has been known to juggle multiple roles, including his position as a linesman at football matches, raising questions about whether he has given full attention to his responsibilities as the convener of the Education Committee. His tenure as party leader was similarly marred by claims of insufficient dedication, culminating in his resignation during a critical general election campaign—an indication of deeper issues within his party's leadership.

In light of his current absence, concerns are growing about the implications this has not only for the Education Committee’s work but also for the overall accountability of Conservative leaders in Scottish politics. The committee is tasked with addressing pressing educational issues, which are ever more critical in a landscape where young people are grappling with complex social issues, including those arising from activist pressures on gender identity in schools. Recent discussions at Holyrood have highlighted the need for careful consideration of these topics, particularly as they relate to the welfare of children.

As the political landscape shifts, the repercussions of Ross's decisions may extend beyond his immediate commitments, potentially influencing the public perception of the Conservative Party’s dedication to Scottish educational issues. His dual role as a parish politician and part-time football linesman continues to attract attention, raising questions about the optics of leadership in a time of heightened scrutiny over political accountability and engagement.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/douglas-ross-snubs-holyrood-summit-35319945)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/douglas-ross-snubs-holyrood-summit-35319945), [[3]](https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/snp-criticise-tory-msp-for-missing-another-holyrood-meeting-1449589)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/douglas-ross-snubs-holyrood-summit-35319945), [[2]](https://www.forres-gazette.co.uk/news/local-msp-unveiled-as-new-scottish-parliament-education-comm-364980/), [[4]](https://www.northern-scot.co.uk/news/changing-times-and-new-challenges-for-highlands-and-islands-371578/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/douglas-ross-snubs-holyrood-summit-35319945), [[5]](https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/holyrood-summit-hears-from-teens-parents-and-experts-who-claim-children-are-pressured-by-activists-into-swapping-genders/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/douglas-ross-snubs-holyrood-summit-35319945), [[3]](https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/snp-criticise-tory-msp-for-missing-another-holyrood-meeting-1449589)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/douglas-ross-snubs-holyrood-summit-35319945> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.forres-gazette.co.uk/news/local-msp-unveiled-as-new-scottish-parliament-education-comm-364980/> - Highlands and Islands MSP Douglas Ross has been appointed as the new convener of the Scottish Parliament's Education Committee. Expressing his delight, Ross stated that the committee will continue to play a crucial role in scrutinising the Scottish Government's education policies, focusing on issues that matter to teachers, pupils, and parents across Scotland. He acknowledged the significant challenges currently facing Scottish education and emphasised the committee's commitment to addressing them effectively.
3. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/snp-criticise-tory-msp-for-missing-another-holyrood-meeting-1449589> - The Scottish National Party (SNP) has criticised Conservative MSP Douglas Ross for missing another Holyrood meeting. Ross, who has previously faced criticism for his attendance record, was absent from a recent session, leading to further scrutiny of his commitment to parliamentary duties. The SNP highlighted the importance of full participation in parliamentary proceedings and questioned Ross's dedication to his role as an MSP.
4. <https://www.northern-scot.co.uk/news/changing-times-and-new-challenges-for-highlands-and-islands-371578/> - Highlands and Islands MSP Douglas Ross reflects on a year of significant change as 2025 begins. After stepping back from his role as Scottish Conservative leader, Ross has focused on his responsibilities as an MSP, including his role as convener of the Education, Children and Young People Committee at Holyrood. He acknowledges the challenges and changes faced over the past year and looks forward to addressing them in his current role.
5. <https://www.sundaypost.com/fp/holyrood-summit-hears-from-teens-parents-and-experts-who-claim-children-are-pressured-by-activists-into-swapping-genders/> - A summit at Holyrood heard from teens, parents, and experts who claim children are pressured into changing genders. A 17-year-old shared her experience of being persuaded by social workers that she was 'born in the wrong body' rather than addressing trauma from a sexual assault. The teenager urged MSPs to remove trans ideology from schools to prevent harm to vulnerable children. The event highlighted concerns about the influence of activists on young people and the need for careful consideration of gender identity issues in educational settings.
6. <https://www.suntci.com/ministerial-statement-by-minister-of-education-youth-sports-and-social-se-p11080-129.htm> - Hon. Rachel Taylor, Minister of Education, Youth, Sports, and Social Services, announced that summer camps will run from July 8th to 26th, 2024, across the Turks and Caicos Islands, with registration opening on June 18th. She encouraged parents to register early to allow children to participate in the engaging and informative camps. Additionally, Taylor highlighted a $7,000 donation from the Royal Bank of Canada supporting the Reaching the Streets Programme, a multisector intervention against youth-related violence in the islands.
7. <https://magneticmediatv.com/2025/03/turks-and-caicos-islands-youth-represented-at-the-uk-overseas-territories-associations-youth-summit/> - Three students from the Turks and Caicos Islands participated in the UK Overseas Territories Association’s Youth Summit on 'Diversity and Inclusivity within the Overseas Territories.' The summit provided a platform for discussing issues such as neurodiversity, LGBTQIA+ rights, and immigration from the perspective of young citizens of the Overseas Territories. The students expressed pride in representing their island and found the summit inspiring, emphasising the importance of youth engagement in driving meaningful change.