# Labour Leader Keir Starmer Supports Recall Petitions in Scotland Amid Expenses Scandal Fallout



Labour leader Keir Starmer has expressed support for recall petitions in Scotland following the expenses scandal involving former Health Secretary Michael Matheson. Matheson was sanctioned for accruing an £11,000 bill on his parliamentary iPad, prompting Starmer to equate SNP leader John Swinney’s defense of Matheson to the actions of former Tory leader Boris Johnson.

Matheson, who accumulated the bill when his teenage sons used the device during a family holiday in Morocco, resigned and repaid the amount. Despite Matheson's 27-day ban from Holyrood, Swinney argued the process was flawed, relating it to comments made by a committee member before the decision. Starmer underscored the need for a recall process similar to Westminster’s, while Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar called the SNP's handling of the issue "shameful."

Scottish Tory leader Douglas Ross also criticized Swinney, suggesting a "red card" for his response to the scandal.

Separately, Starmer confirmed that Diane Abbott, suspended last year for controversial remarks, is free to stand as a Labour candidate in the upcoming General Election. The initial uncertainty surrounding her candidacy had sparked allegations of a "purge" of left-wing candidates.

Meanwhile, SNP leader John Swinney warned that a Labour government could lead to "austerity on steroids" by adhering to the Conservative's fiscal policies. Swinney urged Starmer to commit to an emergency budget focused on health and education to halt austerity.

Additionally, a Savanta opinion poll indicates Labour could gain as many as 28 MPs in Scotland, significantly increasing their representation from one in the previous election. The poll shows Labour tied with the SNP, each holding substantial voter support, with the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats maintaining their positions.

Lastly, the Scottish Greens have expressed outrage over their exclusion from an STV debate featuring SNP, Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democrat leaders, despite being the third-largest party in Holyrood. Senior MSP Ross Greer criticized the broadcaster for the decision, emphasizing the Greens' longstanding representation at various government levels.