# Scottish Party Leaders Dispute Future Direction in Election Campaign Televised Debate



The leaders of the four major Scottish parties participated in the first televised debate of the election campaign on Monday. Key figures included Anas Sarwar of Scottish Labour and John Swinney of the SNP. Both leaders agreed that ousting the current Tory government is an "opportunity Scotland cannot afford to miss."

Sarwar argued that a Labour government could only be established with Scottish Labour MPs, emphasizing a need to replace the Conservative administration. Swinney concurred on removing the Tories but highlighted that the SNP was the primary contender in seats held by Tory MPs.

Douglas Ross, the Scottish Tory leader, expressed regret over his previous support for Liz Truss's mini-budget, which negatively impacted household incomes. Ross emphasized that the UK Government is making decisions aimed at improving the economy.

Debate topics also included the future of the oil and gas industry. Swinney was non-committal on new exploration licenses but advocated for a "climate compatibility test." Sarwar pledged Labour's support for an energy transition at the Grangemouth refinery.

Scottish Lib Dem leader Alex Cole-Hamilton mentioned his party's consultations with fishing communities, contrasting with the Scottish Government's criticized proposals on marine protected areas.

The debate, held by STV, included host Colin Mackay moderating exchanges between the leaders, who discussed various issues facing Scotland and the UK.