# Alison Johnstone faces bias claims after expelling Douglas Ross from Holyrood chamber



Alison Johnstone, Holyrood's Presiding Officer, is facing intense scrutiny following her drastic and seemingly partisan decision to expel Douglas Ross, the former leader of the Scottish Conservatives, from the debating chamber without any prior warning. This incident has ignited accusations of bias, particularly from Conservative MSPs, who argue that Johnstone, a former Green Party member, exhibits clear favoritism towards Nationalist politicians at the expense of Unionist voices.

The controversy erupted during a heated session of First Minister's Questions, where Tory representatives aimed to hold John Swinney, the Deputy First Minister, accountable for his Government's troubling Net Zero policies. As tensions mounted, Ross vocally accused Swinney of “deflecting” from pressing issues by redirecting the conversation to Brexit. Johnstone responded with an abrupt expulsion order, declaring, "Mr Ross, you have persistently refused to abide by our standing orders." In a perplexing moment, Ross seemed disoriented by the sudden decision, needing a second prompt to leave the chamber.

This expulsion, the first of its kind in five years, reflects the escalating discord within Scotland's political scene. After his removal, Ross expressed alarm over what he sees as a “controlling effect” wielded by Johnstone, questioning her impartiality. He pointed to past instances where Johnstone's lack of neutrality was evident, notably highlighting a moment when Swinney was allowed to brand the Conservative party “a disgusting organisation,” a comment that Ross was later prohibited from repeating.

In defense of Johnstone, a Parliament spokeswoman claimed that Ross had been previously warned about his conduct. The current discord in Holyrood is prompting a broader examination of behavior among MSPs, particularly Conservative members, who have faced allegations of “toxic” conduct. SNP depute leader Keith Brown labeled the rhetoric and actions of Tory MSPs as detrimental to the reputation of the Scottish Parliament, painting a picture of a chamber divided by partisan hostility.

Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Alex Cole-Hamilton suggested that Ross’s expulsion was a calculated act designed to attract publicity, insinuating that he intentionally provoked the Presiding Officer to secure his removal. This view resonates with growing concerns about the propriety of conduct among MSPs, particularly in light of recent events that highlight the need for a more civil discourse in the assembly.

The backdrop of Johnstone's election as Presiding Officer magnifies the controversy. As the first Green MSP appointed to this role, she was elected with a supposed mandate for non-partisan leadership. However, this situation raises serious questions about her ability to enforce parliamentary decorum without bias, especially given her previous affiliations and how they may color her decisions.

Ross’s grievances echo a broader unease regarding the dynamics at play within the Scottish parliamentary proceedings, intensifying the challenges for Johnstone as she attempts to maintain order in a chamber increasingly overshadowed by political strife. The fallout from this incident stresses the urgent need for all parties involved to engage in self-reflection, as the questions of bias and conduct loom large over the operations of Scotland's legislature.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14762771/Presiding-officer-accused-blatant-bias-throwing-Tory-MSP-debating-chamber.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.thenational.scot/news/24292651.douglas-ross-refuses-apologise-msps-jibe-john-swinney/> - Douglas Ross, the Scottish Conservative leader, was reprimanded in the Holyrood chamber after questioning John Swinney's integrity and using the nickname 'Honest John'. Presiding Officer Alison Johnstone instructed Ross to refrain from using nicknames in the chamber. Ross initially resisted apologising but eventually did so after further prompting. The incident occurred during a no-confidence motion in the Scottish Government, which ultimately failed with 70 votes against and 58 in favour.
3. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/19301149.alison-johnstone-scotlands-new-presiding-officer/> - Alison Johnstone, a Scottish Green MSP, was elected as the new Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, becoming the first Green to hold this position. She was the sole candidate and secured 97 votes, with 28 against and two abstentions. The Presiding Officer role is non-partisan, and Johnstone relinquished her party affiliation upon assuming the position. Her election resulted in the Scottish National Party (SNP) and opposition parties each holding 64 seats in the parliament.
4. <https://www.holyrood.com/news/view%2Ctoxic-tories-are-tarnishing-the-reputation-of-the-scottish-parliament-snp-deputy-claims> - SNP depute leader Keith Brown criticised the 'toxic' conduct of Tory MSPs, accusing them of tarnishing the reputation of the Scottish Parliament. Brown singled out Conservative leader Douglas Ross and other members for their 'disingenuous conduct and appalling toxicity'. This criticism followed Ross's remarks about Glasgow's new low emissions zone, which led to a homelessness charity altering its operations due to vehicle restrictions. It was later revealed that an exemption had been arranged for the charity.
5. <https://www.thenational.scot/news/19301868.alison-johnstone-becomes-first-green-msp-elected-presiding-officer/> - Alison Johnstone was elected as the first Scottish Green MSP to serve as the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament. She was the only candidate and received 97 votes, with 28 against and two abstentions. The Presiding Officer role is non-partisan, and Johnstone relinquished her party affiliation upon assuming the position. Her election resulted in the SNP and opposition parties each holding 64 seats in the parliament.
6. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/politics/20167982.douglas-ross-scolded-presiding-officer-nickname/> - Douglas Ross, the Scottish Conservative leader, was reprimanded by Presiding Officer Alison Johnstone for referring to Deputy First Minister John Swinney as 'Honest John' during a session of First Minister’s Questions. Johnstone instructed Ross to desist from using nicknames in the chamber. Ross initially resisted apologising but eventually did so after further prompting. The incident occurred during a debate over a controversial ferry deal, which had seen costs escalate and delays in delivery.
7. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-57087382> - Alison Johnstone, a Scottish Green MSP, was elected as the new Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, becoming the first Green to hold this position. She was the only candidate and secured 97 votes, with 28 against and two abstentions. The Presiding Officer role is non-partisan, and Johnstone relinquished her party affiliation upon assuming the position. Her election resulted in the Scottish National Party (SNP) and opposition parties each holding 64 seats in the parliament.