



**Alex Neil
MSP**

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LARGEST UNEMPLOYMENT RISE

NLC GRILLED ON TEACHER DROP

Alex Neil MSP has written to North Lanarkshire Council demanding that the local authority reverses its downward trend in teacher numbers. The authority was revealed to be one of four Scottish Local Authorities responsible for 55% of the drop in teacher numbers across the country. The number of teachers employed by North Lanarkshire Council fell by 96 last year, despite an increase in primary and secondary spending.

Progress was made by the Council in the proportion of p1-3 pupils being taught in classes of 18 or fewer. In 2008 13.4% of children were being taught in classes with 18 pupils or fewer, compared to 12.1% in 2007.

Mr Neil, a Central Scotland MSP said:

"I am really disappointed that North Lanarkshire Council have decided not to keep their teacher numbers up. If they were to invest in replacing those teachers who are retiring we would be seeing more children in smaller classes. I want to hear that they are committed to increasing teacher numbers, to the benefit of the children they are supposed to be ensuring the best possible education for."

"The fall in teacher numbers in North Lanarkshire is despite them spending 9.6% more per pupil in primary and 2.7% more per pupil in secondary schools. I really would like to know where that increase in spending has gone."

The most recent unemployment statistics show that two Lanarkshire constituencies have suffered the largest rises in Scotland.

The Scottish Parliament constituency of Airdrie & Shotts has seen the unemployment rate more than double in the space of a year. The statistics show that between March 2008 and March 2009 there were 1368 more people claiming unemployment benefits, bringing the total to 2706. This rise in Airdrie & Shotts is followed by Hamilton North & Bellshill, where 1228 people were added to the list, bringing the total to 2526.

Central Scotland MSP Alex Neil has called for more effective action by the UK Government to address this worrying trend:

"The Scottish Government is doing all that it can within its very limited powers to address the unemployment issues resulting from this recession."

"We need urgent action from the Chancellor to redirect UK Government spending from useless projects like ID cards and the Trident nuclear missiles into creating new jobs and industry in communities in Lanarkshire."

"Scotland needs to have full control over its own affairs to ensure that funds and policies are directed to tackling Scotland's issues."



South Lanarkshire Councillors visit Scottish Parliament: L-R Cllr Graeme Horne, Aileen Campbell MSP, John Wilson MSP, Cllr Anne Maggs, Christina McKelvie MSP, Cllr David Watson and Alex Neil MSP



Good Luck! Alex Neil MSP and ex-Scotland footballer Graeme Souness lend their support to Scott Cunningham and his guide dog Travis before their trek along the 95 mile West Highland Way which raised tens of thousands of pounds for the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.

MORE CLEANERS FOR NHS LANARKSHIRE

Alex Neil MSP has welcomed the announcement from the Scottish Government that 66 extra cleaners are to be employed by NHS Lanarkshire thanks to extra funding from the Scottish Government. Mr Neil said the extra investment will help in the fight against hospital acquired infections but also provide much needed jobs.

An extra £5.3m is being invested by Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing Nicola Sturgeon MSP to employ more cleaners for Scotland's hospitals. Across Scotland this represents 600 extra cleaners. Expressing his delight at the funding Alex Neil MSP said:

"This is a very important injection of funds to help tackle hospital acquired infections and to provide a timely employment boost to Lanarkshire and Scotland.

"Public confidence in our NHS is crucial, that is why Nicola Sturgeon and this Scottish Government is doing everything within its powers to stamp out hospital infections.



Housing Minister Alex Neil MSP congratulates Mark Hampson from Scottish Gas on the record number of Central Heating Installations this year

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CHECKS BANKING

MILLIONS FOR PENSIONERS

Free benefits checks linked to the Scottish Government's Central Heating Schemes have secured over two and a half million pounds for Scottish pensioners, it has been revealed. Since April 2007, over 1,800 extra pensioners received increased Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance and, in many cases, a full council tax rebate.

Housing & Communities Minister, Alex Neil MSP said:

"The free benefits checks have changed people's lives, helping the poorest and most vulnerable elderly bank millions in unclaimed benefits.

"Against the backdrop of a recession, it is imperative that Scottish pensioners get all the money to which they are entitled. The new, improved Energy Assistance Package will continue to offer pensioners the choice to have free benefits checks."

SURGERY DATES

Friday 5th June:

Uddingston Community Centre
12-1pm

Bellshill Cultural Centre
2-3pm

Monday 8th June:

Airdrie Arts Centre
10-12noon

www.alexneilmsp.net