Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

**Petition Number:** PE01452

**Main Petitioner:** Vince Mills

**Subject:** People’s Charter

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to bring forward measures in all areas it has competency to fulfil the aspirations of the People’s Charter.

**Background**

The People’s Charter is an initiative launched by political activists, trade unions, campaigning organisations and others who want to see the priorities of the UK Government set to deal with “issues faced by ordinary people and away from the interests of ‘big money’”.

The Charter was adopted as TUC policy at Congress in 2009, by the Scottish TUC in 2010, and in 2012 by Welsh TUC.

The Charter contains a range of policy proposals, organised under six themes:

- A fair economy for a fairer Britain
- More and better jobs
- Decent homes for all
- Protect and improve our public services
- Fairness and justice
- Build a secure and sustainable future for all.

The main petitioner is the Secretary of the Scottish Organising Committee for the People’s Charter.

Elaine Smith MSP is a member of the People’s Charter Scottish Organising Committee.
Jamie Hepburn MSP is a member of the Scottish Steering Committee of the People’s Charter.

**Scottish Government Action**

In October 2009, in an oral PQ, by Angela Constance MSP, the Scottish Government was asked whether it endorsed the People’s Charter as supported by the Trades Union Congress (S3O-8227). In his reply the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, John Swinney, stated that:

> The Scottish Government is pursuing a broad programme of action to offset the consequences of recession. We have also expressed directly to the United Kingdom Government our views about the case for continued public investment. We have not been asked to endorse the people’s charter.

In a follow-up question Mr Swinney was asked what he saw as the best route to delivering the People’s Charter in Scotland. He replied:

> Many of the objectives of the people’s charter accord with the Administration’s programme and actions. The arguments that the Administration has made in relation to accelerating capital expenditure to provide investment in our housing sector or in infrastructure in Scotland are part of the intervention that is essential if we are to ensure that we achieve our objectives. The Administration’s on-going and enduring work to tackle inequality in our society and to provide opportunities for all to flourish through sustainable economic growth strikes me as being the most appropriate way in which to make progress on the agenda.

In answer to further supplementary questions he said that:

> “This Administration will commit itself to working with the United Kingdom Government, whether it takes forward initiatives that we think are the appropriate choices for the people of Scotland or whether we can influence it to change its mind on certain questions. I note with delight that today we have had a great concession from the Labour Party in Scotland—it has come to the conclusion that more accelerated capital expenditure is required in the Scottish economy.”

**Scottish Parliament Action**

On 22 June 2011 a Member’s debate on the STUC There is a Better Way Campaign was led by Elaine Smith.

In September 2009 Elaine Smith had lodged Motion S3M-04761, which received support from Labour and SNP Members:

> That the Parliament expresses concern that the current economic crisis in Britain is resulting in mass unemployment, repossession of homes, public service cuts, a threat to equality and increasing national debt;
considers that The People’s Charter for Change sets out what must be done to get out of this crisis and put people first, before the interests of bankers and speculators; notes that the aim is to get one million signatures for the charter; urges attendance at the public meetings being held on 10 October 2009 in Edinburgh and 11 October 2009 in Glasgow to raise awareness of the charter, and supports the six principles outlined in the charter to deliver change, hope and a fairer Britain.

Sandra White MSP lodged an amendment to this motion which sought to

“leave out from “urges” to end and insert “, and believes that this change can only be brought about through the establishment of a fully independent Scotland.”"

Francesca McGrath
Senior Research Specialist
29 November 2012

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