



Douglas Ross accused the first minister of using the sessions for unchallenged political "point-scoring"

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Coronavirus in Scotland: Nicola Sturgeon's daily briefings 'are deviating into party politics'

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Nicola Sturgeon is using her daily briefings on coronavirus as a political platform and should confine them to parliament, where she can be challenged by opposition parties, according to the new Scottish Conservative leader.

Douglas Ross said that "more often than not" the briefings, broadcast live by the BBC, strayed beyond matters of public

health and were used to criticise the UK government. “Now that the Scottish parliament is up and running, the place to make these announcements and to inform the public is in the chamber of the Scottish parliament where democratically elected MSPs can challenge the first minister and her government if they think they need to be challenged,” he said.

Ms Sturgeon has appeared daily, often flanked by her medical advisers and fellow ministers, and has criticised the UK government, once describing its decisions on air travel as “shambolic”.

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Opposition leaders claim that the briefings are like “an SNP party political broadcast,” and Mr Ross’s predecessor Jackson Carlaw accused the first minister of using them for “political point-scoring”.

Mr Ross, who is MP for Moray and leads the Scottish Tories from Westminster — while Ruth Davidson represents the party at Holyrood — said that, in the run-up to next year’s Holyrood elections, the BBC should be considering its coverage of the briefings.

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"I know the BBC will be looking at this extremely closely — these daily press conferences were supposed to be simply on public health matters, and anyone looking at them would say they more often than not stray on to matters that are not directly affecting Covid or the country's response."

A BBC spokesman said: "We are committed to reporting the latest news, public health information and analysis relating to the pandemic and how it is affecting Scotland and beyond. As we have stated consistently, the way we deliver the coverage of the story for our audiences is under constant review."

A spokesperson for the First Minister said: "The First Minister subjects herself to more scrutiny and questioning on a daily basis than most other leaders anywhere — and certainly far more than Douglas Ross's boss Boris Johnson."

"No one is stopping the Tories asking anything they like at Holyrood, but Mr Ross's comments are rendered ludicrous by the fact that Ruth Davidson is running away from any democratic scrutiny whatsoever by accepting a seat in the House of Lords at taxpayer's expense."

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