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# Funding shortfall risks 750 police

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HUNDREDS of police officers could be cut from Police Scotland after it was revealed the force is "facing a £50 million black hole."

The figure confirmed by Audit Scotland means 750 police officers may lose their jobs. The Scottish Police Authority will also need a long-term cash injection of £298 million this decade to invest in technology to support its work.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said: "The SNP is running Police Scotland into the ground."

"Under the SNP our prisons are overcrowded, courts are overflowing and now police numbers could be cut by 750 - that's a disgraceful record."

Highland MSP Donald Cameron warned: "It is deeply alarming that Audit Scotland says that Police Scotland requires a £50 million cash injection in order to prevent the loss of no fewer than 750 police officers."

"On no account must the Highlands and Islands lose members of its overstretched police force due to this mismanagement by the SNP government."

"A visible and active police presence is incredibly important for our communities, which have always considered



MSP Donald Cameron.

their local police officers to be part and parcel of everyday life.

"We've seen a catalogue of errors from the SNP who have arrogantly dismissed all warnings about their police reforms such as the botched merger of our once proud regional police forces, the aborted attempt to hive off the Scottish element of the British Transport Police into Police Scotland, and successive Chief Constables coming and going as if through a revolving door."

A Scottish Government spokeswoman said: "Despite constraints on Scotland's public services through a decade of UK austerity, we are protecting Police Scotland's annual budget in real terms in every year of the current parliament, and since 2016-17 the budget for policing has increased by more than £80 million, bringing it to £1.2 billion for 2019-20.

Information Centre (SPICE) found that Holyrood is likely to get new powers but so will UK ministers, including in devolved policy areas that could allow Westminster politicians to act "alone or jointly with Scottish ministers."

The SPICE document stated: "The powers granted to UK ministers in the Withdrawal Agreement Bill extend to the whole of the UK and relate to both reserved and devolved matters."

Liberal Democrat MP Jamie Stone for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross said: "Mr Johnson has for the past three years been telling us that Brexit is about 'taking back control' but his Brexit Bill opens the door to a power grab by Tory ministers."

A UK government spokesman said: "This Bill is entirely in keeping with the devolution settlement and includes important powers for Scottish ministers."

## Income tax hike

**THE National Audit Office has confirmed Scots paid almost £750 million more in income tax last year compared to the year before.**

**Estimated income tax revenue was around £11.7 billion in 2018/19, compared to £10.9 billion the previous year.**

**Changes introduced by SNP ministers meant people earning over £26,000 paid more in Scotland than if they lived in England.**