

11 June 2026

By email from: [info@forwomen.scot](mailto:info@forwomen.scot)  
to: [firstminister@gov.scot](mailto:firstminister@gov.scot)

Dear Mr Swinney,

Yesterday, in voting for an inquiry into party political funding, the Scottish Parliament agreed that it “recognises wider concerns about the role of money in politics”. The Scotsman has reported that details of the inquiry, including exactly what its remit will cover, have yet to be decided.

We submit that concern about the role of money in politics in Scotland should extend to third sector organisations funded by the Scottish Government which campaign to promote the policies of the governing party in areas of political controversy, and engage in other forms of clear political campaigning.

For example, the Equality Network has been a longstanding large-scale recipient of public money from the Scottish Government. Under its ‘Scottish Trans’ brand it is currently promoting a template letter lobbying MPs to oppose the EHRC’s Code of Practice on Public Functions, Services and Associations being brought into line with the Supreme Court’s judgment in *For Women Scotland v the Scottish Ministers*. This campaign is not a straightforward expression of the organisation’s objectives. Instead, it is seeking to overturn the clarity achieved for same-sex attracted people by the lesbian interveners in the case, in line with a controversial position it shares with the Scottish Greens.

Much of the Equality Network’s activity over the past decade has been like this, and for much of that time the Scottish Government has provided almost all its funding. Other organisations heavily reliant on Scottish Government funding have behaved in a similar way. We can provide extensive further evidence on this. All of these organisations have no accountability to the wider public. They are not open to freedom of information requests and their boards are self-appointing. Over the past decade, many millions of pounds of public funding have been given to such organisations, and their impact on the conduct of business in the Scottish Parliament has often been evident.

We therefore ask that if the Scottish Government now wishes to look more widely at impropriety in the funding of political activity in Scotland, it submits political campaigning by Scottish Government funded third sector bodies to some form of independent scrutiny, for example, by commissioning an inquiry into this by Audit Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

Trina Budge, Marion Calder and Susan Smith  
Directors, For Women Scotland