

## **Eight Conservatives nominated to replace Johnson as party leader**



Foreign Secretary Liz Truss and former Chancellor Rishi Sunak, two of eight candidates nominated to replace Johnson as leader.

On July 7, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced his resignation as leader of the Conservative Party: “It is now clearly the will of the parliamentary conservative party that there should be a new leader of that party and therefore a new Prime Minister and I have agreed with Sir Graham Brady, the chairman of our backbench MPs, that the process of choosing that new leader should begin now and the timetable will be announced next week and I have today appointed a cabinet to serve – as I will – until a new leader is in place....” Holding as it does a substantial majority in the House of Commons – 358 of the 650 seats – the new leader of the Conservative Party, whoever he or she may be, will automatically become the Prime Minister.

The rules of the party establish a two-step procedure for choosing a new leader. First, the party’s MPs elect two candidates from among those nominated by more than a specified minimum number of MPs, after which the members of the party vote for one of the two candidates. The specific rules – for example, how many nominations are needed in order to be an official candidate, which candidates survive and which are eliminated in the first, second and subsequent rounds until there are only two candidates left – are set by the executive of the party’s 1922 Committee – formally, the Conservative Private Members Committee – which consists of the party’s MPs. The day before the announcement, Sir Graham informed the backbenchers that the Committee’s executive was likely to change its leadership rules as early as yesterday to allow another vote of confidence (or lack thereof) in Johnson prior to June 2023. On June 6, Sir Graham had announced that, the minimum required threshold of 15 percent of the party’s MPs having written requesting a vote of confidence in Johnson, there would be a vote that day. In the vote, 211 MPs expressed their confidence in Johnson’s leadership of the party and 148 expressed their lack of confidence in his leadership. Under the party rules, another vote cannot take place for a year. But on July 6, the executive agreed to accelerate its process for electing new members so that a new executive would be in place as of yesterday and could, if it were so inclined, amend the rule prohibiting a second vote of confidence until a year had passed since the previous one. That evening, Sir Graham told Johnson the executive was likely to amend the rule and the next day Johnson resigned.

Yesterday, the Conservative MPs elected a new executive for the 1922 committee. But given Johnson's resignation, its task was no longer to consider changing the rules to allow another vote of confidence before June 2023 but, rather, to organize the election of a new leader. Yesterday it did so. It largely followed the procedure used in 2019 after Prime Minister Theresa May resigned as leader but tweaked several aspects of the procedure in order to move the process more quickly so it could be completed by July 21 and would allow sufficient time for the party members to hear from and consider the candidates and vote prior to the return of the House on September 5. On May 24, 2019, May announced she would resign as party leader on June 7, immediately after the ceremonies commemorating D-Day. On June 4, the 1922 Committee decided that those MPs wishing to stand for election would have to arrange for at least eight nominations by other MPs by the close of business on June 10. Candidates would be required to obtain the support of at least 5 percent of the Conservative MPs on the first ballot and 10 percent of those MPs on the second ballot in order to remain in the contest. Thereafter, on each subsequent ballot, the candidate with the fewest votes would be eliminated. Once there were only two candidates left, the party members – there were 159,000 in 2019 – would be issued paper ballots to be returned within three days. Ten candidates were nominated and it took five ballots to reduce the number of candidates to two, at which point the party members were asked to choose between Johnson and Jeremy Hunt, the foreign secretary. Johnson received 66 percent of the vote and became leader on July 23, 2019 and prime minister the next day.

Yesterday, the 1922 Committee announced the rules for the election of Johnson's successor. It increased the number of nominations needed in order to qualify as a candidate from eight to 20 and set a deadline of 6 p.m. yesterday for submitting the 20 nominations. And it increased the number of votes needed to remain a candidate in the next round to 30. At 1 p.m. today, Sir Graham announced that eight MPs had been nominated by at least 20 MPs: Kemi Badenoch, who resigned last week as minister of state for local government, faith and communities; Suella Braverman, the attorney general; Jeremy Hunt, the former foreign secretary; Penny Mordaunt, the minister for trade policy; Rishi Sunak, who resigned last week as chancellor of the exchequer; Liz Truss, the foreign secretary; Tom Tugendhat, chairman of the foreign affairs committee; and Nadhim Zahawi, appointed last week to replace Sunak as chancellor.

The first round of voting by the Conservative MPs will take place tomorrow at 1:30. Those receiving less than 30 votes will be eliminated. A second round will probably take place on Thursday and a third round will probably take place next Monday. The parliamentary portion of the process is scheduled to be completed by next Thursday at the latest. But it could well be completed before that if one or more of the eight decide to withdraw in addition to those who fail to obtain the required minimum of 30 votes to remain a candidate. Once the MPs have narrowed the choice to two, the party membership will decide. The decisions will be announced on September 5.

It is obviously much too soon to say who will be elected the next Conservative leader and prime minister. But it is quite likely that the parliamentary contest will boil down to a choice of two between Mordaunt, Sunak, and Truss. Sunak is generally regarded as the frontrunner, by a narrow margin, and received an important endorsement from Dominic Raab, the Deputy Prime Minister, justice secretary, and Lord Chancellor. But Truss has received what may be an equally important endorsement from Jacob Rees-Mogg, the minister for Brexit opportunities and government efficiency, who said, "Liz Truss was the most supportive cabinet minister in helping me get Brexit opportunities, she is the right choice for the party and the country." It's quite likely

the Conservative party members, when asked, as they soon will be, to choose the next leader of the Conservative party and prime minister, will be making a choice between Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss.

David R. Cameron

July 12, 2022