

Salmond's resignation sparks leadership question



First Minister Alex Salmond has said that the independence movement will go on but his time as leader of the SNP and thus as First Minister is nearly over. He will not accept nomination as the Leader of the SNP at the party's conference in November and will be replaced as First Minister shortly thereafter.

The Presiding Officer Tricia Marwick MSP commented on the resignation :

“Members from across the chamber will recognise the First Minister as an outstanding parliamentarian and will join me in recognition of his substantial achievements and public service as an MP, MSP and as Scotland's longest serving First Minister. He will bow out following the most remarkable national debate and democratic renewal of our nation.”

This is The Daily Telegraph's video of his resignation speech:

The move was perhaps inevitable but still caused surprise among many of the national politicians and the party faithful.

The Scottish National Party has witnessed a growth in membership of almost 5,000 following the referendum on Thursday.

Commenting, SNP Business Convenor Derek McKay said:

“Seeing our membership spike by nearly 5,000 is incredibly

encouraging.

“Some will no doubt be coming from Labour – whose traditional heartlands were voting Yes on Thursday – but many will be new to politics, and they will continue the legacy of the referendum, and the amazing level of engagement we saw.”

So who else is there to lead The Scottish Government now?

There are two main candidates but there is still time between now and November for any one of the current Cabinet members to raise their leadership head above the parapet.

Nicola Sturgeon is Deputy First Minister and widely viewed as the natural successor. Sturgeon led the independence campaign for much of the time, partly it is said to ensure that much of the debate was wider than simply Mr Salmond himself.

John Swinney already served as Leader of the SNP for four years until 2004 when he stepped down due to the SNP's poor showing in the European elections, and appears not to be seeking any SNP positions now. A former pupil of Forrester High School and the University of Edinburgh where he graduated in Politics, he has been a lifelong career politician and is Finance Secretary in the Scottish Government. He is said to support Sturgeon's bid to be declared leader although she has not yet officially declared herself a contender.

The 80th SNP conference will take place in Perth from 13 to 15 November 2014 at Perth's concert hall. [Details of the conference are here.](#)

Who do you think would make the best candidate? Comments below please!