

SNP Leadership election – and the winner is...

After what seems to be a long five weeks since Nicola Sturgeon announced her intention to resign, the new SNP leader announced Edinburgh on Monday afternoon is Humza Yousaf.

Mr Yousaf is now the First Minister elect until Tuesday when MSPs at Holyrood are widely tipped to vote him in as head of the Scottish Government.

The atmosphere was really quite tense at BT Murrayfield in the Thistle Suite, and then at just after 2pm, Lorna Finn, SNP National Secretary stepped up to the mike in a hushed room.

She and the three candidates were the only ones who knew the result at that stage.

She announced that after elimination in the first round of Ash Regan MSP, and subsequent sharing of the second preference votes for Ms Regan and Kate Forbes, Humza Yousaf was declared the winner in the SNP leadership election.

Aamer Anwar human rights lawyer and friend of Mr Yousaf observed: "It is an incredible moment. It would have been inconceivable to our parents' generation that that an Asian and a Muslim would be standing as the leader of the party and hopefully tomorrow as First Minister Scotland. That doesn't mean that discrimination is over. Humza Yousaf does not have a honeymoon period. We have the worst cost of living crisis in generations. People are suffering in this country and they want to see real change take place. Social justice has been his watchword and he now needs to deliver on that."

Lawyer [@AamerAnwar](#) was in Edinburgh to support his friend [@HumzaYousaf](#) who has been declared the new SNP leader this afternoon. He said there is no honeymoon period for Humza pic.twitter.com/hkiz00kibd

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [March 27, 2023](#)

SNP President and Interim Chief Executive, Mike Russell, said he feels that this result leaves the party in a "very good place". He continued: "We have heard a very strong speech from the new leader that makes it clear that he not only knows where he comes from but knows where he is going and wants to go there in unity. He wants to bring people together. I am very heartened by that. I think it is very important."

Fellow SNP colleague and unsuccessful leadership candidate, Ash Regan MSP was understandably disappointed to be the candidate who was eliminated, but feels that she changed the nature of the conversation. She was keeping her own counsel however on whether Mr Yousaf had already offered her a place in his cabinet, despite the fact that she had just had a short

meeting with him. she said: “We all said that once the new leader was chosen we would all get behind the new leader. What form that will take obviously we don’t know at this stage. Humza said he wants a bigger tent and we will have to see what comes of that.”

Ash Regan said she felt that by being in the election she had changed the conversation. And she is adamant that all three candidates will work together. pic.twitter.com/ZtmscCqoxY

– *Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [March 27, 2023](#)*



Mr Yousaf delivered his first speech after being elected: “Can I thank the National Secretary for overseeing the ballot and our team at Headquarters for their efforts throughout this process.

“It is hard to find the words to describe just how honoured I am to be entrusted by the membership of the SNP to be our Party’s next leader, and to be on the cusp of being our

country's next First Minister.

"Can I begin by paying tribute to my colleagues, Kate and Ash. During almost 20 hustings it probably felt like we saw more of each other than we did our respective partners. You both have put in an incredible shift, and I know you will continue to work hard as part of Team SNP.

"I am not just humbled, of that I most certainly am, I also feel like the luckiest man in the world to be standing here as Leader of the SNP, a party I joined almost 20 years ago and that I love so dearly.

"Friends, the late John Smith got it absolutely right when he said "The opportunity to serve our country, is all we ask".

"To serve my country as First Minister will be the greatest privilege and honour of my life, should Parliament decide to elect me as Scotland's next First Minister tomorrow.

"And just as I will lead the SNP in the interests of all party members, not just those who voted for me, so I will lead Scotland in the interests of all our citizens whatever your political allegiance. If elected as your First Minister after tomorrow's vote in Parliament, know that I will be a First Minister for all of Scotland, that I will work every minute of every day to earn and re-earn your respect and your trust.

"I will do that by treating you, the people of Scotland with respect. There will be no empty promises, no easy soundbites when the issues in front of us are difficult and complex, because government is not easy and I won't pretend it is.

"My immediate priority will be to continue to protect every Scot as far as we can from the harm inflicted by the Cost of Living Crisis, to recover and reform our NHS and other vital public services, to support our wellbeing economy and to improve the life chances of people across our country.

“I will move quickly to develop plans to extend childcare, improve rural housing, support small business, and boost innovation.

“I will bring forward reforms of the criminal justice system and work with local government to empower our local authorities.

“And as First Minister I will not shy away from the tough challenges, those that require the difficult decisions, but where there is that challenge, I will use it to find opportunity.

“My government will seize the economic and social opportunities of the journey to Net Zero, a country as energy rich as Scotland should not have people living in fuel poverty. The Government I lead will renew and redouble our efforts to lift people out of poverty, to make work fair and make our economy work for people, and to ensure as we become a more prosperous country we also become a fairer country.

“And while I have had my fair share of battles with the UK Government over the years, and there may well be some more to come. I will work with them, and with other devolved nations constructively where I can in the best interests of our nation.

“I am a proud Scot, and equally a proud European too, and Scotland is a European nation. We want to return to the European Union and play our part in building a continent based on human rights, peace, prosperity and social justice.

“To the people of Scotland, the SNP has earned your trust by governing well, by ensuring that our priorities are your priorities.

“As a Party, and a Government, we are at our best when we are radical and bold and the challenges we face today require nothing less of us.

“That is what I promise the people of Scotland if Parliament puts its trust in me tomorrow.

“Joining the SNP, for me, was an act of hope and also statement of intent.

“I was determined then, as I am now, as the 14th leader of this great party, that we will deliver independence for Scotland – together as a team.

“Leadership elections by their nature can be bruising, however, in the SNP we are a family.

“Over the last five weeks we may have been competitors or supporters of different candidates, but from today – we are no longer team Humza, Ash or Kate, we are one team, and we will be the team, we will be the generation that delivers independence for Scotland.

“Where there are divisions to heal we must do so and do so quickly because we have a job to do and as a Party we are at our strongest when we are united, and what unites is our shared goal of delivering independence for our nation.

“To those in Scotland who don’t yet share the passion I do for independence, I will aim to earn your trust by continuing to govern well, and earn your respect as First Minister by focussing on the priorities that matter to us all, and in doing so using our devolved powers to absolute maximum effect to tackle the challenges of the day.

“For those of us who do believe in independence, we will only win by making the case on the doorsteps. My solemn commitment to you is that I will kickstart our grassroots, civic-led movement and ensure our drive for independence is in 5th gear. The people of Scotland need independence now more than ever before, and we will be the generation that delivers it.

“Before concluding, I want to take this opportunity to thank

some very special people. I wouldn't be standing here today if it wasn't for the support, encouragement and hard work of a number of people.

"First of all, there is my amazing wife Nadia. She is not just my rock, she is my compass who helps guide me through the most difficult of times. There is no way I would be here if it was not for your love, your support and the advice you give me, thank you for believing in me and always being there for me. I love you more than I can ever find words.

"To my girls, you are my everything, and while this job at times will be all-consuming, know that the most important job in my life is being your dad. To Maya and Amal, you will always come first.



Mr & Mrs Anwar, proud parents of the new SNP leader PHOTO ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter

"To my mum, dad and sisters, thank you for your unwavering support throughout my life, for picking me up when I have been down, and for telling me to keep going when at times I had my

doubts.

“I would also like to thank my phenomenal campaign team, who have worked day and night over the last few weeks to support me, you have all sacrificed time with your families and friends because, like me, you believe in our vision of a progressive, socially just Scotland. I will not let you down.

“A special mention to Neil Gray. He is quite simply the best corner man I could have asked for. During the rollercoaster of emotion that is any leadership contest, you have been by my side every step of the way and I would not have made it over the finish line without your support. And to Shona Robison, your wise counsel has been indispensable during this contest.

“To our now former Leader Nicola Sturgeon and her Deputy in government John Swinney.

“Thank you for your dedicated service to this party, this country and all its people. You have left me strong foundations to build on.

“And thanks, too, to my colleagues in both parliaments, across local government and activists around the country who have been so supportive and encouraging. I will ensure I harness the talent across the Party and the country as I build the team that will take Scotland forward and deliver our nation’s independence.

“From our brilliant MPs, ably led by Stephen Flynn and Mhairi Black in Westminster to our leaders in Local Government, as well as the exceptional group of MSPs in the Scottish Parliament, our Party has enormous talent right throughout its ranks.

“Our parliamentarians, our councillors, our activists and our members all have a vital part to play on our journey to independence, as do our friends across the independence movement.

“To have your confidence as I take on the role of SNP Leader means so much.

“My final thanks is to my grandparents, who unfortunately are no longer alive to see this day. I am forever thankful that my grandparents made the trip from the Punjab to Scotland over 60 years ago. As immigrants to this country, who knew barely a word of English, they could not have imagined their grandson would one day be on the cusp of being the next First Minister of Scotland.

“As Muhammad Yousaf worked in the Singer Sewing Machine Factory in Clydebank, and as Rehmat Ali Bhutta stamped tickets on the Glasgow Corporation Buses, they couldn't have imagined, in their wildest dreams, that two generations later their grandson would one day be Scotland's First Minister.

“We should all take pride in the fact that today we have sent a clear message, that your colour of skin, your faith, is not a barrier to leading the country we all call home. From the Punjab to our Parliament, this is a journey over generations that reminds us that we should celebrate migrants who contribute so much to our country.

“It is what drives my commitment to equality that will underpin my actions as First Minister.

“Thank you for the honour of choosing me to be your nominee to become Scotland's 6th First Minister. I will dedicate every waking moment to serving you, the people of Scotland.

“Thank you.”

