

# Johnson faces showdown in Parliament as MPs seek to block no-deal Brexit



Boris Johnson *Photo: Victoria Jones/PA*

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Boris Johnson faces a showdown in Parliament after he vowed to push for a snap general election if rebel MPs succeed in a bid to seize control of parliamentary proceedings.

Parliament returns on Tuesday after recess, with MPs looking to take control of Commons business to allow them to discuss proposed legislation to block a no-deal Brexit.

Addressing the nation outside Number 10, the Prime Minister insisted “I don’t want an election, you don’t want an election” but moments later a senior Government source said any bid to “wreck” the UK’s negotiating position would prompt motion for an early election.

The source said Mr. Johnson would request a general election on October 14 if the move was successful.

A motion for the snap poll would be tabled by the Government which would require the support of two-thirds of MPs under the Fixed-term Parliaments Act (FTPA).

Ex-justice secretary David Gauke, who is among the senior Tories who have put their name to the cross-party legislation, said if MPs did not act then Britain would leave without a deal on October 31.

But the source said the Government’s motion on an early general election would be published before MPs vote on Tuesday so MPs would know the consequences of voting against the Government.

The source said: “I think if you were to have any chance of securing a deal, which the PM has been very clear that he wants the deal, you would want to have that election on October 14 so that you can go to European Council and secure a deal.”

The source said the vote would be treated as though it is a vote of no confidence, and that any Conservative MP voting against the Government could have the whip withdrawn.



Credit: PA Graphics

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But a source close to the group of rebel Conservative MPs opposed to a no-deal Brexit said: “It’s a bit rich for the Prime Minister to point the finger at colleagues who plan to defy the party whip – colleagues who voted for a deal three times – while he voted with Jeremy Corbyn to inflict the two biggest parliamentary defeats on a government in British history.

“The Prime Minister seems to be doing everything he can to bring about an election while claiming it’s the last thing he wants.”

If MPs agree on Tuesday to allow the cross-party group to seize control of Commons business, the legislation will be considered the following day.

Under the terms of the European Union (Withdrawal) (no 6) Bill, the Government must seek a delay to the UK’s withdrawal from the EU until January 31 if there is no agreement with Brussels in place by October 19 and Parliament has not approved a no-deal Brexit.

Mr. Gauke said he believed Mr. Johnson was threatening a snap poll because he expected to lose the vote in the Commons.

He said MPs had devised a “watertight” mechanism to help avoid the UK crashing out of the EU, but he thought the parliamentary arithmetic was “tight”.

Speaking on the BBC’s Newsnight programme, he said: “I think he is moving in that direction and I think to some extent that seems to be the plan because I think he probably expects to lose tomorrow.

“I don’t know whether he will but I think that’s what he’s expecting and his response will be to go to the country.

“The problem is not, if you like, whether the mechanism works, it’s whether we’ve got the numbers tomorrow, and I think it will be tight.

“But I have to say if we don’t act we know pretty well for certain that we will be leaving without a deal on October 31.

“The test is over the course of the next two days and we may or may not win the votes and that is the test.”

Asked if Tory MPs would risk deselection over their position on Brexit, he said: “All of us believe that it is vitally important that Parliament has a say and that we cannot leave the European Union on October 31 without a deal unless Parliament consents to it.”

Jeremy Corbyn said Labour will “take the fight to the Tories” in a general election, insisting the party is ready.

Speaking at a rally in Salford, Mr. Corbyn said: “I am proud to lead our party, I’m proud to take the fight to the Tories and I will be delighted when the election comes. I’m ready for it, you’re ready for it, we’re ready for it, we’ll take the message out there and above all, we will win for the people of this country.”

Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage predicted Boris Johnson will lose the Commons vote on Tuesday and the country will face a general election in October.

Speaking at a rally in Colchester, Mr. Farage said: “I can’t predict how that vote will go tomorrow but I suspect the Prime Minister will lose and I suspect we’ll be facing a general election probably to take place on October 14.”

Last updated Tue 3 Sep 2019

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Source:

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