

Boris Johnson urges MPs to back him over Brexit, saying: ‘I don’t want an election’

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has suggested he will call a general election if MPs succeed in a move that could delay Brexit.

In a statement outside Downing Street, he said: “I want everybody to know – there are no circumstances in which I will ask Brussels to delay. We are leaving on 31 October, no ifs or buts.”

And in a clear statement to Conservative MPs who are considering voting against the Government, he said: “ I don’t want an election, you don’t want an election.”

Mr. Johnson has said he hopes to agree on a deal with the EU – but the UK must leave on October 31 whether there is a withdrawal deal or not.

However, MPs including two recent Conservative cabinet ministers, hope to introduce laws that would force him to write to the EU to ask for yet another delay, until January 31, 2020.

The legislation would force Mr. Johnson to do this if he fails to obtain a deal, and if he also cannot persuade MPs to vote for a motion allowing the Government to go ahead with a no-deal Brexit. The UK was originally due to leave the EU on March 29 of this year.



Prime Minister Boris Johnson speaking outside his official residence in London's Downing Street.

Mr. Johnson said: "If there is one thing that can hold us back in these talks it is the sense in Brussels that MPs may find some way to cancel the referendum. Or that tomorrow MPs will vote – with Jeremy Corbyn – for yet another pointless delay."

A cross-party group of MPs is to attempt to bring legislation to the House of Commons that would force Mr. Johnson should be obliged by law to write to Donald Tusk, the President of the European Council, asking for another delay. And they have even drafted the letter they want the Prime Minister to write, calling for a delay until 11 pm on January 31.

Those behind the proposed new law include Tory chancellor Phillip Hammond and former Justice Secretary David Gauke. Both were members of a Conservative government as recently as July this year.

Labour MP Hilary Benn will present the proposed Bill to the Commons. Other

supporters include Green MP Caroline Lucas.

At the moment, Mr. Johnson can argue that leaving the EU is the default position whether there is a deal or not, and he does not need to win any further votes in the Commons. But this law is designed to change that so that the Government is no longer able to carry out Brexit without asking MPs for approval first.

Before they can propose the legislation, opponents of “no-deal” will need to seize control of the Commons agenda, which is usually set by the Government. This will require winning a vote and may need the co-operation of Commons Speaker John Bercow, which he is likely to provide.

Tory whips have warned Conservative MPs that they will be deselected if they vote against the Government on Brexit, probably leading to the end of their political careers. However, this does not appear to have Tory opponents of no-deal from continuing the fight.

Mr. Johnson convened an emergency meeting of his Cabinet today, and is reported to have discussed calling an election as soon as Wednesday, September 4. MPs backing Mr. Johnson include Guy Opperman, Conservative MP for Hexham. He said over the weekend that it was right to deliver Brexit and move on to other issues.

Mr Opperman said: “I accept that not everyone agrees with the result of the 2016 EU Referendum, but I am a democrat and I believe we need to leave the EU and abide by the decision of the referendum, in light of the assurances given by all political parties, and MPs, both before and after the referendum. I am also of the view that the British people want Brexit sorted and their Government to focus on the domestic renewal of our country.”

But some Labour MPs indicated they did not support further delays.

South Shields MP Emma Lewell-Buck said on Twitter: “I am against no deal, my preference has always been for a deal. An extension with no clear purpose will be futile and lead us nowhere.”

Referring to Mr. Johnson’s decision to suspend of “prorogue” Parliament to allow a Queen’s Speech to take place, she said: “As for prorogation, it is an affront to our democracy and sets a dangerous precedent.”

Bishop Auckland MP Helen Goodman said: "I am totally opposed to a no-deal Brexit which will bring medicine shortages and food price rises. I will vote against it this week."

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