

# [***John Swinney expected to lead Scotland after taking the helm of the Scottish National Party***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BYP-X801-DYMD-60MM-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

LONDON — Scotland's former deputy first minister was poised to become its third leader in just over a year after taking the helm of the troubled Scottish National Party on Monday.

John Swinney, who led the SNP two decades ago, was the only candidate to [*replace First Minister Humza Yousaf*](https://apnews.com/article/scotland-politics-hamza-yousaf-confidence-vote-aff1c1ea48252c038564b19855501609) as the leader of the party.

The SNP has been in turmoil since long-serving First Minister Nicola Sturgeon abruptly stepped down last year during a campaign finance investigation that eventually [*led to criminal charges against her husband*](https://apnews.com/article/scotland-nicola-sturgeon-husband-arrested-1f42e22ec771bdcf77624631b3dfaf17).

Swinney, 60, who joined the party at age 15, will try to bring stability to the SNP as it fights efforts by opponents to weaken it going into U.K.-wide parliamentary elections expected later this year.

“The polarization of ***politics*** does not serve our country well," Swinney said as he was named party leader. “I will reach out to everyone willing to join with us in good faith and seek compromises that serve our nation well. We need to stop shouting at each other and talk. More than that, actually, we need to listen. As first minister, I will do exactly that.”

Yousaf announced his resignation last week after a political miscalculation in which he booted the Green Party from the ruling coalition of Scotland’s semiautonomous government. The SNP is one seat short of a majority in the local parliament with 63 of the 128 voting seats, so it needs to partner with at least one opposition party.

The pro-independence SNP was weakened by the campaign finance scandal and divisions over transgender rights, but was ultimately brought down by Yousaf’s decision to oust the Greens because of differences over climate change goals. Yousaf was unable to persuade other parties to back his minority government in Scotland’s parliament.

Facing the prospect of two no-confidence votes that had been scheduled, Yousaf quit rather than be forced out.

Yousaf will remain first minister until his replacement is elected. Swinney is likely to be elected to that position later this week.

Swinney thanked Yousaf for serving with “grace and dignity,” and said that his “moral leadership on the issue of Gaza has been a light in very dark times."

Yousaf won a bruising campaign to take over the party after Sturgeon, who was first minister for eight years, resigned unexpectedly in February 2023.

About a month later, Sturgeon's husband, Peter Murrell, who was the party's chief executive, was arrested as police investigated how 600,000 pounds ($750,000) earmarked for a Scottish independence campaign was spent.

Sturgeon and Colin Beattie, the party’s former treasurer, were later [*arrested and questioned*](https://apnews.com/article/scotland-nicola-sturgeon-arrested-party-5bc263b37c06ac7e46f8bfb89a9e5454) in the inquiry, but they were released without being charged with a crime. Murrell was charged last month with embezzlement.

Swinney had served as Sturgeon's deputy first minister during her tenure as Scotland's leader, but stepped down when she left office.

Conservative leader Douglas Ross said that Swinney’s past makes him unlikely to bring the change that Scotland needs.

“John Swinney was joined at the hip with the disgraced Nicola Sturgeon and his fingerprints are all over her numerous policy failures and cover-ups,” Ross said.

Swinney pledged to lead a center-left government focused on the economy, jobs, the cost of living, the National Health Service, schools, public services and the “climate crisis.”

Swinney said that he would make his case to persuade people of the need for Scottish independence, which voters rejected in 2014. He cited Brexit and the cost-of-living crisis, which he blamed on U.K. politicians in London, as being bad for Scotland.

“They demonstrate why Scotland needs to have independence to make our own decisions and create our best future,” he said. “If someone is an independence supporter in Scotland and they want Scotland to be independent, there’s only one political party that will ever deliver and that’s the Scottish National Party.”

Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar echoed Ross' remarks, saying that the “SNP is offering more of the same.”

“John Swinney has been at the heart of this incompetent government for 17 years and at the heart of the SNP for 40 years," Sarwar said. "John Swinney’s record is one of failure.”

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