



Written by [James Murphy](#) on April 15, 2019

Former Tory Leader Urges May to Step Down; Hints at Boycott of EU Elections

It must be hard to be Theresa May these days. The U.K. prime minister has utterly failed to deliver Brexit to her nation, which voted to leave the European Union in 2016. No less than 32 of her cabinet ministers have resigned in the past two years owing to her government's handling of Brexit. And members of the powerful 1922 Committee of Conservative backbenchers are thinking seriously about changing party rules that state a no-confidence vote can only be considered a full calendar year after surviving one. [May survived a Tory no-confidence vote](#) in December of last year.



And now, at least one former Tory leader is [urging her to step down](#) ahead of upcoming EU elections scheduled for May 23. Iain Duncan Smith (shown), often referred to by his initials IDS, led the Conservative Party from 2001-2003. More recently, he served as a cabinet minister under the previous prime minister, David Cameron, until March of 2016, a few short months before the Brexit vote.

"I know that the prime minister has already said she's going. She said she would go as and when the agreement was ratified, which was looking at May, June. I think those dates still stand," Smith told Sky News on Sunday.

"I think that what the PM has to do is aim everything now towards departure before the Euros [election] which would then allow her to step away having done what she said she would do, getting the UK out of the European Union one way or the other and then we can have another leadership election and pick a new leader, which is the way it has to be."

The Conservative Party is currently polling seven points behind the Labour Party in the [latest voter intention poll from Opinium](#).

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Not leaving the EU on March 29 as originally scheduled has apparently caused the Tories to lose the support of the electorate, either to Labour or UKIP. It's the worst poll for the Tories in five years, and the worst may be yet to come. Now, the new [Brexit Party](#), fronted by Nigel Farage, threatens to erode Conservative support even more.

"It was on the 29th [of March] when we didn't leave; that's when this has all gone wrong. Up until then, people were prepared to give Theresa May the benefit of the doubt," Smith said.

"The big problem was as soon as we didn't leave, you could see all the poll ratings starting to crash. And it's wholly linked to the fact that Leave or Remain, they were all expecting us to go, and when we didn't go it looked like a complete breach with the pledge that we had made, and that's a disaster for a political party."



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As of now, if the country is still going to leave the EU, the U.K. is looking at having to hold essentially meaningless elections for the European Parliament. The new leave date is October 31, unless May's deal or some other plan is agreed to before then.

Many in the Conservative Party are openly suggesting that the party boycott the May 23 EU elections. Almost 40 Conservative association chairmen have written to May to say that they will not take part in the coming elections, as it would be "inconsistent and unprincipled to do so."

The letter, which was acquired by the Daily Mail, accuses May of breaking "solemn pledges" to honor the 2016 referendum by delaying Brexit. Further, if Brexit is still to happen, the letter insists that contesting in the EU elections in any way would be both fruitless and a gigantic waste of time and resources. The election is projected to cost £110 million (\$140 million).

Iain Duncan Smith agrees with the letter's writers. "I really urge the prime minister to be very clear with them, we're not fighting the European elections. Any idea of doing that is disaster. If we make that clear today and say we are going to leave, deal or no deal, before the Euro elections, I think the public will start to snap back and say, 'ok, these people mean business,' and when we do it, that's the moment when we'll end all of the nonsense from these other peripheral parties like UKIP and the Brexit Party," Smith said.

Currently, 27 of the 73 U.K. members of the EU Parliament are Tories.

May has consistently said that she does not want the U.K. to take part in the EU elections and insists that the U.K. can cancel the elections as late as 24 hours prior to their occurrence. But that rings hollow in the ears of hardline Brexiteers, who wonder at the wisdom of holding the elections at all, given that the U.K.'s goal is to leave the EU, and it's past the time when that should have happened. If Brexit is to happen, as May insists it will, the EU elections are a complete waste of time and money.

Iain Duncan Smith is right. May needs to step aside sooner rather than later. Her rhetoric aside, May's actions have been, at the very least, confusing to her party members and the British citizens. Nobody, not in her party, the Labour Party, Parliament at large, the U.K. citizenry, and maybe not even in the EU understands what she's doing any more.

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