
STURGEON READY TO DELAY SCOTTISH SECOND VOTE

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Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has softened her stance on the timing of a second referendum on independence from the UK. Last week, she called for a new vote before the UK leaves the EU.

After initially calling for new referendum on Scottish independence in late 2018 or early 2019, Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said on Sunday she would be prepared to delay the vote to appease the UK government in London.

Sturgeon told the broadcaster ITV that she was prepared to negotiate the date with British Prime Minister Theresa May, who has ruled out a repeat vote during the lifetime of the current parliament.

"It is for (May) then to say what timescale she thinks would be appropriate and then yes I am happy to have that discussion within reason," Sturgeon told the British broadcaster.

Won't wait years

But she warned that Scotland could not wait several years for Britain's negotiations on leaving the EU to be finalized.

"Then it gets much harder for Scotland to seek a different course. But if she (May) is talking in the spring of 2019, a bit later perhaps than I was suggesting then there may be some room for discussion around that," she said.

Sturgeon had called for a second independence referendum from Britain in the same week as the UK parliament passed legislation allowing May to begin the so-called Brexit divorce proceedings with Brussels.

Scottish voters rejected independence from the UK in 2014, and last year - unlike most of Britain - opted to remain in the EU

The timing of the second vote is timed to coincide with the outcome of final negotiations between the EU and Britain over the country withdrawing from the bloc.

Sturgeon's Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP), which dominates the Edinburgh-based devolved parliament, wants Scotland to either remain in the EU or rejoin the bloc, after Britain leaves.

But London has scoffed at the idea of a repeat referendum, with May saying "now is not the time"

to create further instability for the union between England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the four countries that make up the UK.

Several hurdles ahead

Apart from London, Scotland faces opposition from several other EU states including Spain, which is facing independence campaigns from several regions, and whose leaders have said that a newly independent state would have to go through a years-long negotiation process to rejoin the bloc.

In a separate television interview on Sunday, Sturgeon said an independent Scotland would continue to use the British pound as its currency but conceded that the country may eventually be pressed to use the euro.

The latest Panelbase poll for the Sunday Times newspaper put support for Scottish independence at 44 percent, while 56 percent backed staying in the UK.

It also found 51 percent of Scots did not want a vote on independence within the next few years.

Scots rejected independence by 55-45 percent in a referendum in September 2014. But the majority of Scots voted in favor of Britain staying in the EU in June with 62 percent voting remain and 38 percent voting leave.

mm/jm (Reuters, AFP)

Kaynak/Source: