
SWEDISH PM STEFAN LOFVEN LOSES VOTE OF CONFIDENCE

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Sweden's prime minister will be invited to head a caretaker government while a new candidate is sought after he lost a confidence vote. The balance of power could now be in the hands of the far-right Sweden Democrats.

Swedish PM Stefan Lofven lost a mandatory confidence vote on Tuesday. The confidence vote is mandatory after a general election. Lofven's ouster was expected and now it is up to the speaker, Andreas Norlen of the opposition Alliance bloc, to task Moderate Party leader Ulf Kristersson with forming a new government. Former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt was Tweeting about it immediately after the vote

In order to pass legislation through parliament, some MPs on the right wing would like the Alliance to cooperate with the Sweden Democrats, now the country's third-biggest party. For two of the four Alliance parties --the Center and Liberals -- that option is unacceptable.

Sweden's two traditional blocs emerged neck-and-neck after the country's September 9 election. Lofven's center-left bloc won 144 seats, compared with 143 for the rival center-right Alliance bloc. Both fell short of a majority as support for the far-right, anti-immigration Sweden Democrats made gains, giving it 62 seats in the 349-seat parliament.

The Alliance bloc has been calling for Lofven to step down since the election.

Sweden elections 2018: Who's who?

This election is unlikely to pan out well for Prime Minister Stefan Lofven. His Social Democrats have dominated Swedish politics since the 1930s and effectively built up the country's welfare state. Now, however, the SAP is expected to record a low score. Lofven has been attacked by the right for his open-door migrant policy, and from the left for later slamming that door shut.

Traditional blocs

The left-wing bloc □ made up of the Left Party, the governing Social Democrats and the Green Party □ emerged with 40.6 percent of the vote. Lofven, the bloc's leader, ruled out cooperating

with the Sweden Democrats.

The opposition Alliance bloc — comprised of the Moderate Party, Center Party, Liberals and Christian Democrats — scored 40.3 percent of September's vote. The Alliance could achieve a majority if it teamed up with the Sweden Democrats. However, the Center Party and Liberals would likely not agree to join with the far right. The bloc's other two parties, the Moderates and Christian Democrats are open to joining with the Sweden Democrats, providing they had no influence over policy.

The Alliance hoped that the Social Democrats or Greens would break from their traditional blocs and join them, but Lofven rejected that idea.

Next steps

On Monday, parliament also elected Andreas Norlen of the opposition Alliance bloc as its speaker, giving the four-party group a slight advantage. One of Norlen's first tasks is to choose a prime ministerial candidate. He is permitted to give a maximum of four potential PMs the opportunity to form a government. If they all fail, fresh elections will be called.

Kaynak/Source: