

## Rail minister Simon Burns stands down in deputy speaker bid

**Transport Minister Simon Burns has resigned from the government to run for the position of deputy Commons Speaker.**

The MP for Chelmsford has been responsible for the controversial HS2 rail link during the past year, having previously been a health minister.

One of the three deputy Speaker positions is vacant after previous incumbent Nigel Evans stood down to fight sexual assault charges.

Mr Burns has clashed with Speaker John Bercow several times in the past.

On one occasion, Mr Burns described the man under whom he now seeks to serve as a "stupid sanctimonious dwarf".

BBC political correspondent Ross Hawkins said the Conservative MP had apologised afterwards - but only to groups of people who felt insulted, not necessarily to the Speaker himself.

### 'Forever grateful'

Were he to be elected, relations between the pair would not be altogether comfortable, our correspondent added.

There are plenty of Conservatives who do not support Mr Bercow and might vote for Mr Burns just to irritate him, he continued.

MPs are elected to the role of deputy Speaker, under reforms proposed by Mr Bercow shortly after he took on his role in 2009.

To stand for election, MPs need to be sponsored by at least six other MPs.

One of the other candidates for the role is Nadine Dorries, who in 2009 [described](#) the Speaker as "oily" and suggested he was "mistrusted by up to half of the House".

Conservative backbenchers Eleanor Laing and Brian Binley have also been named as potential candidates.

The successful applicant will join existing deputies, former Labour MPs Dawn Primarolo and Lindsay Hoyle, in helping to chair Commons business.

### 'Loyal and dedicated'

Mr Burns' decision comes ahead of an expected reshuffle of middle-ranking Conservative ministerial ranks in coming weeks.

In his resignation letter to Prime Minister David Cameron, he wrote: "It has been a privilege to serve in your administration for the past three and a quarter years and I will be forever grateful to you for giving me that opportunity in both the Departments of Health and Transport.

"You can rest assured that I will continue to support your leadership of both the Conservative Party and the government."

The PM's response described the MP as a "loyal, dedicated and committed colleague".

Mr Cameron said: "I know that this will not have been an easy decision for you to make, and one you will have given a huge amount of thought to.

"After serving the government so ably for over three years, you will certainly be missed, but I completely understand and respect your

decision."

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