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How MPs will choose their new Speaker

Mickey Djuric The Canadian Press

OTTAWA - The House of Commons will vote for a new Speaker Tuesday in a rare midsession election.

Steven Chaplin, a fellow at the University of Ottawa's Public Law Centre, said this is only the third time in Canadian history that a Speaker didn't complete their full term.

Anthony Rota resigned from the position last week amid controversy. He had invited parliamentarians, during a visit by Ukraine's president, to applaud a veteran who served in a Nazi unit in the Second World War.

The longest-serving member of the House, Bloc Québécois MP Louis Plamondon, was put in as an interim Speaker - a move Chaplin said is a first in Canada's history, but one that signals the House aims to rise above partisanship.

"It's unprecedented, but they've managed to work their way through a very orderly process and I think that says a lot about the House in many ways," Chaplin said Monday.

All members of Parliament, except for party leaders and ministers, are eligible

to become the Speaker. And all of them are automatically on a list of candidates MPs can vote for. Those who don't want to be considered have until 6 p.m. on Monday to take their names off the list before Tuesday's vote.

Those left in the running are expected to deliver short speeches Tuesday about why they want the job. After the speeches, there will be a 30-minute break. Then, anonymous in-person voting begins on a ranked ballot.

A second vote would only happen to break a tie.

A handful of Conservative, Liberal and NDP MPs, along with Green Party Leader Elizabeth May, have indicated they want the role, which comes with a pay raise and an official residence known as The Farm.

But many others are not interested. Most MPs who were asked about running for the Speaker's job politely declined, with several citing their lack of French skills as a key reason why they didn't see themselves in the role.

MPs are expected to back candidates based on their political affiliation, despite the Speaker remaining neutral once

elected.

Whoever is elected will assume the role immediately. But first they will have to make a show of reluctance as they are dragged to the chair by fellow MPs. It's a tradition that pays homage to the Speakers in parliamentary tradition who risked execution in order to perform their roles.

"That's a historic thing because there was a period of time, and in fact there have been seven Speakers in the U.K. history who were executed over time," Chaplin said. "Their main job is to speak on behalf of the House, so they were the people who would tell the king, 'No, you're not getting the legislation you wanted,' or, 'You're not going to get your way.'"

"And sometimes the Speaker didn't return to the House."

The Canadian Press