

Premier plans pitch for francophone summit

QUEBEC (Gazette) — Premier Robert Bourassa said yesterday he wants Québec to be host to the next summit of francophone nations, to be held at least a year after next month's summit in Paris.

Bourassa said he plans to make a pitch at the 38-nation summit in Paris to be next host.

The Paris summit is the first-ever meeting of leaders of francophone nations.

Bourassa talked about the summit before leaving for Toronto, where he will dine tonight with such financiers as Conrad Black of Argus Corp. Ltd., to try to sell Quebec to Ontario investors.

Bourassa told reporters he accepted Black's invitation because he wants to revive economic co-operation between Ontario and Quebec.

"We should consolidate the economic partnership between Quebec and Ontario with closer economic collaboration," he said in a news conference in his office, a few hours after he was sworn in as an MNA after his Jan. 20 byelection victory in the riding of St. Laurent.

He said Ontario is a competitor but also an economic ally.

Bourassa said he expects to speak with Ontario Premier David Peterson during his two-day visit.

Peterson and Bourassa met a few days after the Québec Liberals swept to power Dec. 2 to discuss possible joint economic efforts, including the transport and sale of hydroelectric power to the midwestern United States and marketing strategy for products manufactured in both provinces.