

PM 'betrayed' Quebec on summit Johnson charges

By Robert McKenzie Toronto Star

QUEBEC CITY — Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's decision to give New Brunswick a seat at the upcoming summit of French-speaking nations is "a betrayal" of the deal he made with Quebec, says outgoing Premier Pierre Marc Johnson.

An angry Johnson told a news conference yesterday the agreement the Parti Quebecois government reached with Mulroney last month providing for Quebec's

presence at the summit was based on the assumption that no other provinces would be invited.

Mulroney announced on Friday that New Brunswick will be able to attend the conference — expected to be held in Paris late January or early February — on the same terms as Quebec. New Brunswick, which has a large francophone population, is Canada's only officially bilingual province.

But Johnson, answering reporters' questions after the first meeting of the new 23-member PQ caucus since the Dec. 2 Quebec election, made it clear the PQ's honeymoon with the federal Progressive Conservatives has come to an end.

'Betrays spirit'

He said Quebec's understanding had been that Canada's representation at the summit would follow the pattern of the Agence de coopération culturelle et technique (ACCT), the French-speaking "commonwealth" in which Quebec has a seat alongside Canada as a "participating government."

The inclusion of New Brunswick was "to all intents and purposes a betrayal of the spirit and the letter" of the ACCT ground rule, Johnson claimed.

The Premier said he was "surprised" by Mulroney's announcement, describing it as a move to "dilute" Quebec's presence on the international scene.

But Johnson suggested Mulroney may have yet to clear the Ottawa-New Brunswick agreement with France and the 15 or so other countries expected to attend the summit.

Three seats

Johnson's version of the way Quebec's presence at the summit was negotiated appears to be contradicted, however, by a confidential PQ government document which The Star has obtained.

The document, a Quebec government official's account of the first official meeting Jan. 11, 1985, of External Affairs Minister Joe Clark with Bernard Landry, PQ international relations minister, mentions the New Brunswick issue.

The document indicates Quebec knew very well that Ottawa wanted New Brunswick at the conference table, it says that Landry and the senior civil servants accompanying him said they wanted the

"ACCT model" for the francophone summit and "considers New Brunswick's presence as unnecessary."

Clark is quoted as replying that "the exclusion of New Brunswick would add a complication to the file."