Quebec shouldn't use French summit to pitch sovereignty Ouellet says

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ACCRA. Ghana – Canada won the referendum so the Quebec government shouldn't seek support for independence at this weekend's meeting in Africa of French-speaking countries and provinces. Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet says.

Ouellet says the Quebec government might take its case to the international stage, as it has in the past.

Some Quebec politicians "have been speaking out abroad for a number of years and I suspect they will continue to do it," he said.

But, he added, "It's very difficult to ask for recognition of something that you were denied by your own people."

Ouellet made the comment yesterday as Canada, Quebec and New Brunswick prepared to take their seats at this weekend's francophone summit in the tiny West African state of Benin.

The summit is held every two years and brings together former French colonies and those territories and provinces around the globe that share the common bond of the French language.

Canada will be represented by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. It's expected that Deputy Premier Bernard Landry will represent Quebec.

Ouellet said Canada will use the summit to make the same pitch for democracy and human rights it put forward during the recent Commonwealth meeting in Auckland. New Zealand.

To that end. it will encourage French-speaking members to give the francophone summit a more political character.

The francophone summit has differed from its Commonwealth counterpart in making language and culture the principal focus of its activities since its first meeting a decade ago.

This summit could see it evolve beyond that with the creation of a secretary-general's office filled by a political figure with a sound international reputation.

Canada is also expected to press for support for the peacekeeping proposal it presented at the United Nations in September.

The plan is aimed at reducing international conflicts by improving the ability of the UN to deal with disputes before they break out.

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