

Quebec and Ottawa nearing accord on francophone summit

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of The Gazette

QUEBEC — Premier Pierre Marc Johnson said yesterday an agreement is imminent between Quebec and Ottawa on the province's participation in a summit meeting of the leaders of francophone nations.

But he refrained from blasting the Liberal candidate who spilled the beans about the agreement, saying only that Gil Rémillard was "tactless."

Meeting with reporters yesterday as part of his campaign tour for the Dec. 2 provincial election, Johnson refused to give details on the agreement.

"We are in the process of finalizing what could be an agreement," he said.

Johnson said representatives of both governments have been involved in tough negotiations in re-

cent weeks, and the accord could be announced in a matter of days.

Mulroney's press secretary, Bill Fox, said in Ottawa yesterday an announcement on an agreement will likely be made before the election.

Rémillard, who is running for the Liberals in the Quebec City riding of Jean Talon, was an adviser to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney on constitutional matters until the election campaign began.

He is also a law professor at Laval

University.

Quebec has been asking for independent recognition among the French community of nations for 15 years.

At issue is Quebec's diplomatic status at such a meeting.

The province has insisted that it be given the status of participating government; Ottawa has maintained that Quebec should be part of the Canadian delegation.

Because of France's support for

Quebec and its refusal to take part in one until the Quebec government was satisfied with its status, no summit has ever been held.

But a summit could be held in February if Ottawa and Quebec come to an agreement.

Yves Martin, Quebec's deputy minister of intergovernmental affairs, said in Ottawa that only the signatures of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Johnson are missing.

He refused to discuss the details of

the agreement for the forthcoming summit.

Michel Amar, an aide to Monique Vezina, federal minister of state for international relations, said the proposed agreement was on the agenda for a priorities committee meeting yesterday.

Marie Quinty, aide to Louise Beaudoin, Quebec's minister of intergovernmental relations, said negotiations with the federal government were going "very well."