

# French summit opening will likely feature PM rather than Bourassa

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## QUEBEC

The latest protocol two-step in the Quebec-Ottawa-Paris triangle has emerged over whether Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa will speak at the opening session of the francophone summit in Paris.

It appears he will not — unless the French Government changes its plans for the summit, to be held Feb. 17 to 19.

Yesterday, Quebec officials reacted calmly to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's statement that he, and not Mr. Bourassa, would speak at the opening session of the summit.

"At this point, the decision of the French Government is to have a formal opening that is relatively short," Ronald Poupart, an adviser to Mr. Bourassa, said. "Only five leaders would speak, and it is completely normal that Mr. Mulroney should speak as the representative of North America.

"But, if the French Government changes its approach, and 10 or 15 leaders should speak, it would be completely normal for Mr. Bourassa to speak."

Mr. Mulroney said in a newspaper interview published yesterday that only leaders of national governments would speak at the opening of the summit.

"If the leader of a national government is invited, I presume that means me," Mr. Mulroney told reporters and editors at *Le Devoir*. "As far as I know, I am the only leader of a national government in Canada. I speak for all Canadians, francophone and anglophone."

The issue of the nature of Quebec's participation in a francophone summit has delayed the holding of such an event for years.

The French Government has insisted, with Quebec, that Quebec should have full participating status, while under the Liberals, the federal Government insisted that only the federal Government should speak for Canada.

In November, during the Quebec election campaign, Mr. Mulroney reached an agreement with former premier Pierre Marc Johnson.

For the first time, Quebec's role seemed to be clarified: Quebec would be able to "participate fully" in all discussions under provincial jurisdiction, and be "an interested observer" of subjects of federal jurisdiction.

However, the issue became clouded when Mr. Mulroney struck a similar agreement with New Brunswick, an agreement which infuriated Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Bourassa, however, pointed out that New Brunswick was already a member of the Agence de

co-operation culturel et technique des pays francophones. Quebec's role as a member of the group was a model for the agreement.

Last week, Ontario announced that Bernard Grandmaitre, minister responsible for francophone affairs, will be part of the federal delegation.

On Friday, Quebec's international relations minister Gil Rémillard said that Mr. Bourassa would speak at the opening, but then yesterday, Mr. Mulroney made it clear that he, and not Mr. Bourassa, would speak.

The remarks were part of the first formal interview Mr. Mulroney has given a Canadian newspaper since his election in September, 1984. In the conversation, which was reported on Saturday and Monday with a transcript published yesterday, Mr. Mulroney dealt with a number of subjects, from the constitution and the economic development of Montreal to the creation of a provincial Progressive Conservative Party in Quebec.

Mr. Mulroney's decision to grant his first formal interview to *Le Devoir* is an indication of the concern he has about losing support in Quebec.

In it, Mr. Mulroney argued that his Government had been "the victim of perceptions" in the growth of the idea that Montreal was under-represented in his Cabinet.

"I am going to try to increase the Montreal presence and the presence of the region in the federal Cabinet in the near future," he said.