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## **FIRST NATIONS REGIONAL ECONOMIC CIRCLE**

Statement by:  
The Honourable Diane Bellemare

Wednesday, June 15, 2022

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### FIRST NATIONS REGIONAL ECONOMIC CIRCLE

**Hon. Diane Bellemare:** Honourable senators, *kwei*. I rise today to speak in the Senate, which is located on the traditional unceded territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation.

To mark National Indigenous History Month in true Quebec fashion, I would like to share with you a very interesting initiative that is taking place today and tomorrow in the Innu community of Mashteuiatsh in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. It is the first ever First Nations regional economic circle, with the theme “Relations Between Us.”

This gathering, which will be held in French, is being organized as a follow-up to the first Grand Economic Circle of Indigenous Peoples and Quebec, which took place in November in Montreal. The objective was to ensure the full participation of Indigenous peoples in Quebec’s economy, and participants expressed a desire to continue the conversations in the regions and to develop concrete projects.

This is the first of several regional circles that will be held across Quebec. This time, more than 250 participants, including both Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders, elected officials and entrepreneurs, are meeting with the objective of building partnerships. It is a great example of social dialogue in action.

In an article published on April 13 in *Le Devoir*, Pekuakamiulnuatsh First Nation Chief Gilbert Dominique was quoted as saying that Quebec’s business community is increasingly interested in establishing good relations with Indigenous peoples.

He went on to say:

... there are benefits to creating businesses in partnership with band councils — and to establishing businesses in Indigenous communities, or at least nearby.

Subjects on the agenda include financing tools, Indigenous rights and affirmation, renewable energy, tourism, training and innovation.

We have much to learn from the values of Indigenous communities, including cooperation and sharing. In Quebec and elsewhere, these grand economic circles can show us the way toward inclusive economic development that demonstrates greater respect for communities and resources and recognizes dialogue as key to finding mutually beneficial solutions.

This event is certainly in keeping with the National Indigenous Economic Strategy that was launched recently by a group of Indigenous economic and business organizations. Senator Brian Francis, caucus chair of the Progressive Senate Group, is involved.

I hope this will be an opportunity for all the participants to forge ties with one another and with us.

Thank you. *Meegwetch*.

**Some Hon. Senators:** Hear, hear.