

Introduction

“It is simply not acceptable to turn our backs on the progress we have made and assume Maine’s unique quality of place is enough to sustain and grow our economy. It is simply not acceptable to be anything less than bold.”

Maine Innovation Economy Advisory Board and Maine Office of Innovation, 2010 Science and Technology Action Plan: A Bold Approach to Stimulate Maine’s Economy

In the winter of 2001 – 2002, then State Economist Laurie Lachance researched and wrote “Maine’s Investment Imperative.” This analysis of Maine’s economy was one of the four background papers used by the Institute for a Strong Maine Economy (under the auspices of the Maine State Chamber of Commerce) in preparing its report “No Place to Hide – Confronting Maine’s Economic Future.” The Institute’s report became the basis of discussion at many of the gubernatorial forums and debates and truly set the agenda for economic development.

In the run up to Maine’s 2010 gubernatorial election, the Maine State Chamber and the Maine Development Foundation (MDF) have partnered again to produce a set of economic research pieces and a summary report titled: “Making Maine Work: Critical Investments for the Maine Economy.” The purpose of the report is to once again frame the agenda and debate among the candidates on issues affecting the economy and Maine’s long-term development and prosperity.

The Maine Development Foundation created the two research pieces that serve as the background for “Making Maine Work”:

- Maine’s Investment Imperative II: Unleashing the Potential
- Maine’s Investment Imperative II: A Survey of Maine Business Leaders

This work is the research report entitled “Maine’s Investment Imperative II: Unleashing the Potential.” Both reports, the survey, and related research can be found online at www.mdf.org.

About this Report

Over 200 reports on issues in the Maine economy were identified, and from those, over 100 were reviewed and summarized to help make the case for investment and formulate the recommendations found in this report. Additionally, this report reflects the voice and priorities of over 1,000 Maine business leaders who responded to a Maine Development Foundation survey on the factors that affect their investment decisions in Maine.

This report is a valuable tool for a number of reasons:

- It does not try to reinvent the wheel, rather it pools from hundreds of experts, years of experience, and the best new ideas to find good ideas for Maine
- It reflects the voice of over 1,000 Maine business leaders and aligns recommendations with their priorities
- It provides specific recommendations that leadership can act upon to promote investment in Maine
- It is comprehensive and looks at the whole picture in Maine rather than the individual pieces of the puzzle

As “No Place to Hide” was able to set the stage for lowering Maine’s tax burden, this effort is designed to deliver results by focusing on the pertinent issues today and spelling out actions that will improve our economy and life in Maine.

Report Organization

This report is organized in three chapters:

1. Unleashing the Human Potential (demographic challenges and imperatives)
2. Unleashing the Economic Potential (economic challenges and imperatives)
3. Unleashing the Investment Potential (building a foundation for investment)

The first two chapters present the demographic and economic challenges that Maine faces and ideas on how to address them. The third chapter presents the economic issue areas that affect the business community’s ability and willingness to invest in the state, presented in priority order as determined by the survey. Specific recommendations are provided, by issue area, which will create an environment conducive to investment. Each of the issue area sections is organized as follows:

- Facts and findings
- Relative importance of issue according to the 1,039 survey respondents
- Recommendations from experts over time
- Investment imperatives and specific recommendations

These are big issues and there are many moving parts, but it is both necessary and possible, with a plan, leadership and will, to move Maine forward.