



# AROOSTOOK PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2020

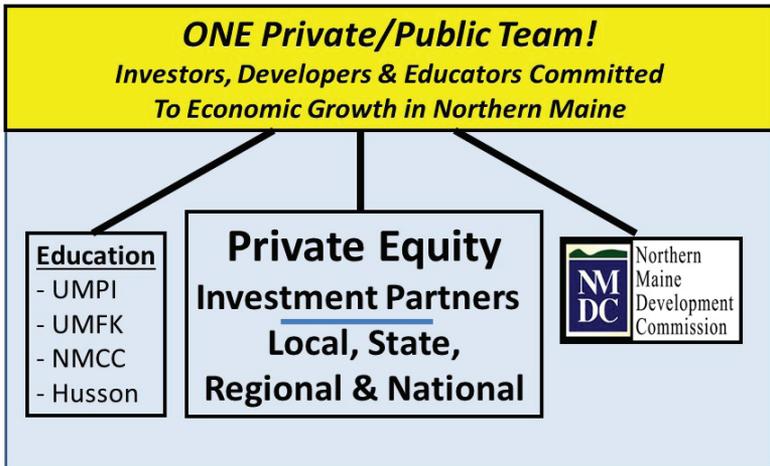


# Mission Statement

Aroostook Partnership is the private/public partnership speaking with one voice and engaging the private sector leadership, talents, and resources in the region to ensure the economic survival and growth of Aroostook County.



## “The Aroostook Partnership”



[www.arostookpartnership.org](http://www.arostookpartnership.org)

## Letter from the President/CEO

### To Our Membership:

The year 2020 will long be remembered for one of the most disruptive and challenging years in history. As we headed eagerly into the new year in pursuit of the many important objectives identified and developed through AP's Board collaboration, we soon found ourselves facing the uncertainty, danger and confusion brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our lives were transformed overnight into a virtual world of business through this unparalleled light switch event. No aspect of our lives was spared as the pandemic transformed how we conducted business (if at all), education, leisure, recreation, shopping, healthcare and our efforts toward economic development.



**Paul Towle**

As we all worked hard to understand our best paths forward in this new unprecedented and near-contactless world, I realized that the work of AP, like many other organizations, would need to be conducted virtually. Most economic development organizations and some businesses made the transition quite seamlessly but many of our customer-facing businesses were forced to alter operations dramatically or shut down completely. At the same time, the world of education had to be altered significantly. This led to our Executive Committee adjusting focus and our committee Chairs reimagining what would be possible in our newly constrained operating environment.

Our Workforce Growth and Education to Industry Committee, chaired by Todd Saucier, remains solidly engaged in working to raise awareness among our educators and students of the many great companies and career opportunities available across Aroostook. Although unable to host our successful business-teacher socials, we remained connected to our educators to keep business workforce needs on the radars of our K-12 systems and post-secondary institutions. AP helped Fort Fairfield High School establish their innovative Career Lab while also organizing a centralized effort to focus on and welcome our increasing number of new residents to the area as urban dwellers continue to their migration to the safety of rural America, including our rural Maine. Also, recognizing the great challenges of delivering education in pandemic times, AP created and delivered a comprehensive program of public recognition and thanks to our educators, staffs and administrators for achieving education success against all odds. The initiatives being worked in this committee are numerous, impactful and continue to address one of The County's greatest challenges- attracting and developing a qualified and credentialed workforce to sustain our local businesses, communities and, ultimately, our County way of life.

Veteran Chair Jason Parent continues to lead our Legislative Advocacy Committee. He has established several high-value programs to help give an Aroostook County voice to matters in Augusta and help keep our local delegation engaged in lawmaking efforts positively impacting our area. AP once again sponsored and helped organize a successful US Senate debate with WAGM as well as giving a broader voice to all our local candidates by recording and airing on WAGM candidate interviews on major issues impacting The County. Jason's committee also continues to host weekly

## Letter from the President/CEO continued

interactive conference calls while the legislature is in session where our business and education leaders interact with our local delegation on issues and bills important to their businesses or communities. It is unlikely AP will be able to host another Aroostook Day at the Legislature this February. However, we have already begun assessing how we might be able to provide this valuable networking session between our business and education leaders and the legislative committee Chairs and Commissioners. AP will continue to keep Aroostook priorities relevant and in front of our leaders in Augusta by the many unique programs organized and run by our Legislative Advocacy Committee.

Ryan Rogers chairs our Business Growth and Expansion Committee where our priorities shifted within his committee to include not only attraction but retention efforts. I worked with our team at NMDC to help educate our local businesses on the many opportunities for federal and state assistance to help them through the financial hardships resulting from lost income due to COVID-related changes. I am pleased to see that most of our impacted County businesses received some type of CARES Act funded support and are making their way through the challenges of the pandemic.

I continued to work separately on strategic attraction efforts focused this year largely on Loring and our forest products sector. With the state and nation's increased efforts to reduce carbon emissions, Aroostook County is well-positioned to offer green solutions from our abundant forest resources. Biofuels of all types, bioplastics, textiles and high-value chemicals, all produced from our forests and mill residues, are key areas of investment attraction potential which will address climate change initiatives in Maine and around the world. AP remains engaged with key organizations and investors nationally and internationally to promote this key County natural resource differentiator.

As we wind the year down, a part of me wishes 2020 had never happened, but another part of me sees the positives in what we have all persevered through. The grit, ingenuity and toughness of our business and education leaders has convinced me that we can face challenges of any magnitude and find a successful path forward. At the center of this, the Aroostook Partnership is effective because it is a genuine and collaborative partnership consisting of our most passionate leaders, thinkers and doers. With two years' experience leading AP, I am even more engaged and committed to leading this great organization through both our challenging and good times ahead.

I have the greatest respect for, and extend my deepest appreciation to, AP's Officers, Directors and our supporting Members across our county. Your continued belief in and support of the Partnership elevates Aroostook on the larger stage and keeps us a part of many broader conversations. I especially want to thank our outgoing Chair, Matt McHatten, for his steady leadership, consistently sound advice and unmatched passion for the success of Aroostook County.

I hope you all join me as we look forward to a vaccine, business recovery, new business growth and increased population and employment in 2021!

Paul Towle  
President & CEO  
Aroostook Partnership

## Board Members

Greg LaFrancois - Northern Light A.R. Gould Hospital  
 Robert Clark - Northern Maine Development Commission  
 Matt Nightingale - Katahdin Trust Co.  
 Jennifer Buckingham - Tempo Employment  
 Jason House - TD Bank  
 Kris Doody - Cary Medical Center  
 Sam Collins – S.W. Collins Co.  
 Ginger Kieffer - Momentum Aroostook  
 Todd Saucier - UIG  
 Carter Vaillancourt - Daigle Oil  
 Ryan Rogers - Dead River Co.  
 Cheri Doak - KeyBank  
 Jason Parent - ACAP  
 Chris Anderson - FA Peabody  
 Steve St. Pierre - KeyBank  
 Al Martin -Twin Rivers

Jacob Buck - Maine Malt House  
 Ryan Bushey - Louisiana Pacific  
 Jon McLaughlin – SADC  
 Matt McHatten - MMG Insurance  
 Carl Flora - Loring Development Authority  
 Timothy Doak - RSU 39  
 Mike Kelley Jr. - Machias Savings Bank  
 Dave Cyr - NMDC Board Chair  
 Joy Barresi-Saucier - Empower Aroostook  
 Gina LeBlanc-Eggert - Emera Maine  
 Tim Crowley - Northern Maine Community College  
 Ray Rice - University of Maine at Presque Isle  
 Scott Voisine - University of Maine at Fort Kent  
 Jennifer Flynn - Husson University

## Aroostook Partnership Major Investors



## Letter From the Chair

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To Our Membership:

To say that 2020 represented unprecedented challenges is certainly an understatement. The pandemic that brought the world to a halt in mid-March persisted through the year and continues to fundamentally change how we work and live. While optimism is on the horizon, we are bracing for what is expected to be a difficult winter.

That being said, the positive attributes of the County and its incredible sense of community provided for relief and support. Our abundant outdoor activities and open spaces were a definite advantage. Most of all, as has been the County way, we stepped up and watched out for one another. I am sure you'll agree, we are fortunate to be living in such a great place during historically difficult times.



**Matt McHatten**

Despite the challenges and uncertainty presented by the pandemic, the Aroostook Partnership was able to continue to advance in several areas critical to our future. Highlights included:

- The Population Growth/Education to Industry committee completed a successful effort to thank County educators for the difficult pivot to remote learning this Spring. As the father of a 2020 High School graduate, the media outreach reinforced what we already knew – our teachers and school administrators are an incredible asset.
- The Political Advocacy committee chaired by Jason Parent was instrumental in keeping the County connected and informed as we contemplated casting our respective votes on November 3rd. Further, it was also great to see the County take center stage with one of four U.S. Senate debates. Thanks go out to Kelly O'Mara and WAGM for providing resource and leadership to this effort.
- Opportunities Aroostook continued to advance with more enhancements planned in the future. We averaged over 6,500 views per month with 165 job postings on average. Further reflecting the impact of our digital presence was the fact that views increased to well over 8,000 in the early months of the pandemic. This digital focal point is critical not only locally but also to the increasing numbers that are considering a move to an area like ours.
- Last week, we introduced a survey meant to continue to assess how we improve on the efforts to support the workforce needs of today and in the future. Developed in partnership with Husson University, the intent is to use it as a starting point in gathering data around the various aspects needed to prepare for the succession and growth of the County's labor pool. More to come as the results are gathered. I encourage you to complete it. Our aging workforce continues to be the greatest economic challenge we face as a region and data is needed to focus resource and strategies.
- Once again, the Partnership reflected an important point of contact for those wanting to learn more about Aroostook while keeping us relevant in the issues that impact our area. Paul once again was heavily involved in a

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## Letter from the Chair

variety of business inquiries, statewide initiatives, and emerging economic opportunities. I've heard many times in traveling the State that our ability to be cohesive and collaborate is one of the great strengths of the County. Paul deserves a lot of credit for this. Instead of logging thousands of miles in 2020, he spent countless hours on video calls while making sure we were all informed and connected.

Where do we go from here? The long term needs of the County that drove the creation of the Aroostook Partnership remain highly relevant. As stated, the issues we are faced with are complex and not easily solved. With that said, our ability to build economic strategy with common goals, stay relevant in and affect issues impacting our region, and provide a prominent point of communication allowing us to be far more effective as a group versus individually. Given the challenges forthcoming, it is more vital than ever to continue this work.

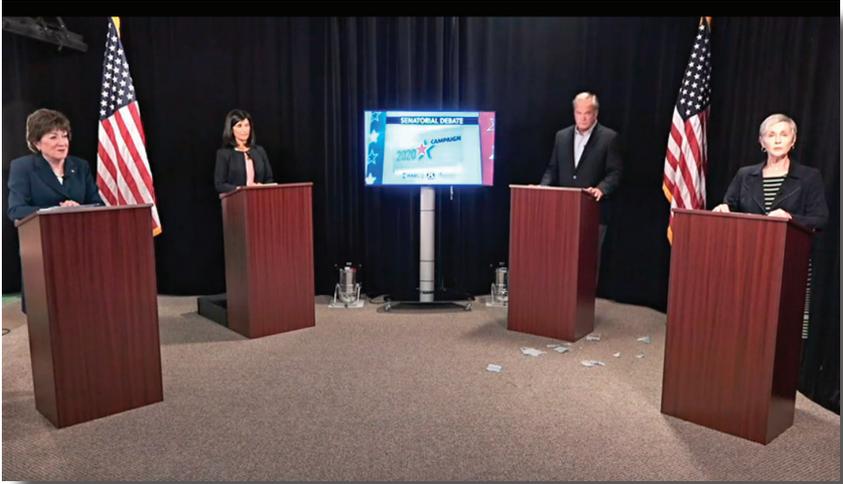
We appreciate the time commitment and leadership of our Board of Directors and the continued membership support from all of you. Last, as outgoing Chair, many thanks for your efforts in sustaining the way of life we are all passionate about as citizens of Aroostook County.

Matthew R. McHatten  
Chair of the Board  
Aroostook Partnership



## 2020 Priorities

Support	Support 3 Committees (Education to Industry, Advocacy, Business Attraction and Retention)
Continue	Continue Statewide Collaboration
Expand	Expand AP Membership
Begin	Begin Aroostook Brand Development
Test	Test Targeted National Recruiting
Promote	Promote Investments in Forest Products Industry



**SENATE DEBATE 2020**— *The Aroostook Partnership teamed up with WAGM-TV to provide statewide viewers with a look into the Maine candidates for the U.S. Senate. From left to right, Senator Susan Collins, Maine House Speaker Sara Gideon, Max Linn and Lisa Savage. AP and WAGM during the election cycle also provided interviews with local candidates for the Maine House and Senate. AP does not make political endorsements but does take an active role in lobbying governmental officials for the betterment of the Aroostook County economy.*

### Marketing activities and initiatives have included:

1. Addressed numerous civic organizations and briefed town and city managers.
2. Personal contact with business developers and CEO's.
3. Brainstorming activities with Loring Development Authority.
4. Continued newsletter mass e-mailings.
5. Secured news coverage in local and statewide media.
6. Participated in statewide business gatherings.

## Educator Thank You Campaign





**OPPORTUNITIES AROOSTOOK**

HOME JOBS COMPANIES INTERNSHIPS WHY AROOSTOOK LOG IN CONTACT US

A service of:



**ORGANIC VS. PAID**

FACEBOOK SUCCESS WAS OBTAINED ORGANICALLY: UNIQUE AND CREATIVE POSTS WITHOUT ADDED BUDGET AND BOOSTS.

**LIKE SPIKES**

FACEBOOK.COM/OPPORTUNITIESAROOSTOOK EXPERIENCED LIKE SPIKES IN MARCH, APRIL, MAY, JULY, SEPTEMBER & NOVEMBER

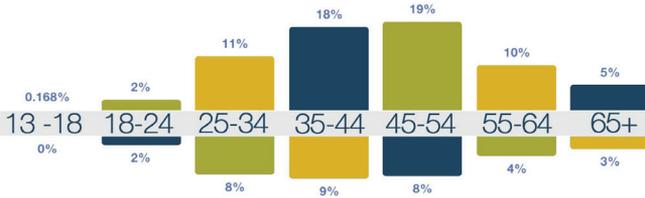
**TOP CLICK SOURCES**

#1 FACEBOOK.COM #2 GOOGLE.COM #3 OPPORTUNITIESAROOSTOOK.COM  
#4 SEARCH.YAHOO.COM #5 SEARCH.BING.COM

## WHO FOLLOWS OUR PAGE?

**WOMEN 65%**

**MEN 34%**



*It's a beautiful thing when a career & a passion come together.*

[opportunitiesaroostook.com/jobs/](http://opportunitiesaroostook.com/jobs/)



Job Title	Company	Location
Dental Assistant	Academy Dental	179 Academy St, Presque Isle
Volunteer/Recruitment Coordinator	Aroostook Agency on Aging	Presque Isle
Children's Case Manager	Central Aroostook Association	Presque Isle
Maintenance Technician in Fort Fairfield	Manpower-Maine	Fort Fairfield
Information Systems Associate	MMG Insurance	Presque Isle
Programmer Analyst II	MMG Insurance	Presque Isle
Residential DSP	Central Aroostook Association	Presque Isle
Procurement / Purchasing Clerk	Aroostook Band of Micmacs	Presque Isle
Part Time Sales Associate	Country Collectibles	Presque Isle
Industrial Electrician	Daquam Lumber Maine Inc	Masardis
Truck Driver CDL/A	Northeast Pellets, LLC	Ashland
Entry-Level Manufacturing - Smith & Watson	Manpower-Maine	Houlton
Industrial Electrician - Direct Hire	Manpower-Maine	Ashland
Production Operator	Manpower-Maine	Mars Hill
Auto Detailer and Counter Agent	Avis	Presque Isle International Airport

**INDUSTRIAL ELECTRICIAN**  
NASHVILLE PLANTATION  
ASHLAND SAWMILL

**OPPORTUNITIES AROOSTOOK**

**DIRECTOR OF HEALTH SERVICES**  
LIMESTONE

**MSSM**  
Maine School of Science and Mathematics

**OPPORTUNITIES AROOSTOOK**

## Aroostook Partnership



**ANNUAL MEETING 2019** — AP President/CEO Paul Towle, left, gave an overview of AP activities in 2019 at the Annual Breakfast Meeting held at the Northern Maine Community College in November. Keynote speaker for the event was Maine Community College System President David Daigler, who discussed how the System, and particularly NMCC, is collaborating to address today's challenges to deliver degrees, credentials and qualifications of value to help meet tomorrow's workforce needs.



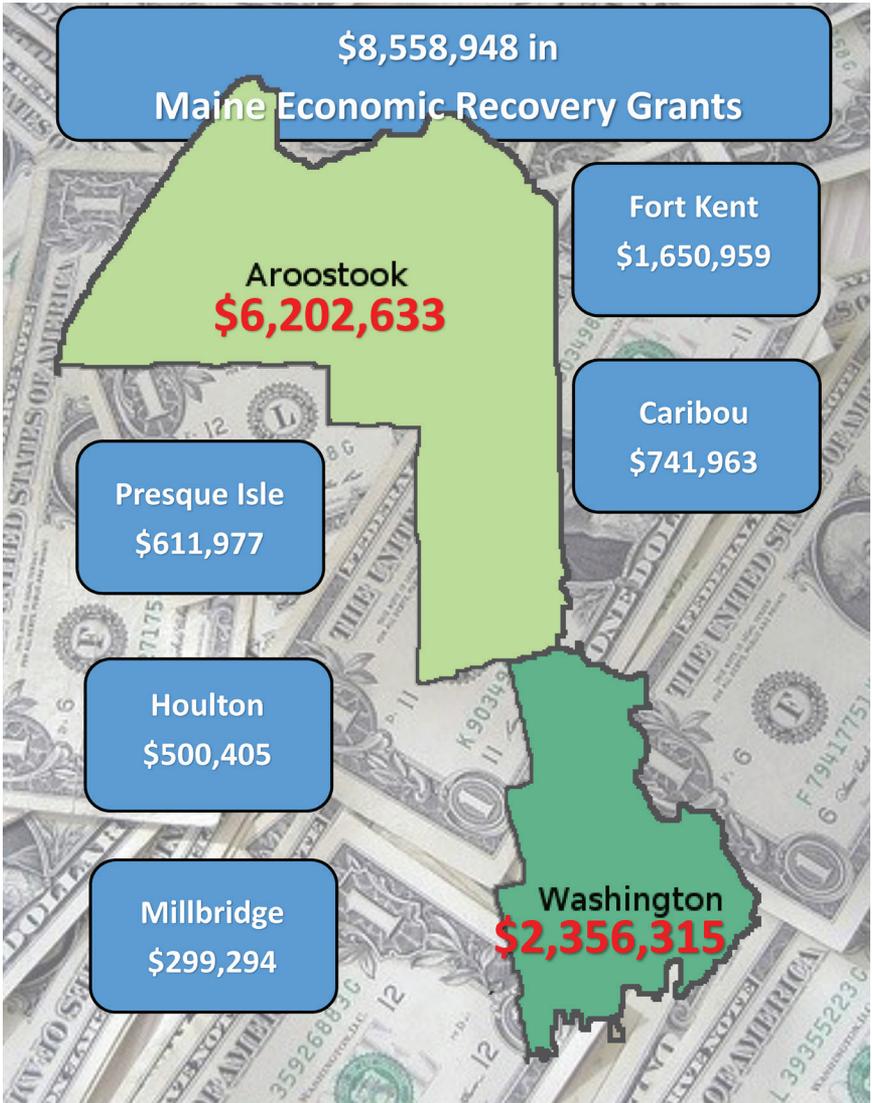
**BOD MEETINGS** — How the world has changed. To the left is an Aroostook Partnership Board of Directors meeting in February of 2020. Good in person attendance at Northern Maine Development Commission in Caribou. Just below is a Zoom meeting from August featuring a presentation from Yellow Breen of the Maine Development Foundation. In past years the Partnership has tried to spread its BoD meetings around to different parts of Aroostook County holding at least one per year in Houlton and the St. John Valley and changing up the locations in Central Aroostook. Virtual meetings are now the norm and may continue for months.



***The Aroostook Partnership is part of a dedicated group working on a regional basis to support economic development efforts. The Aroostook Partnership is the only public-private regional economic development organization collaborating with all the communities in the County.***

## Maine Economic Recovery Grants

The Aroostook Partnership, knowing full well the hardship this pandemic would create for businesses, has worked diligently to inform members and other stakeholders about assistance programs.



*These are the numbers from the first round of Maine Department of Economic and Community Development CARES Act funding distributed by Northern Maine Development Commission.*



# **ARROOSTOOK** *Partnership*

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