



Media Contacts:

Jason Parent - 768-2808  
[jparent@nmcc.edu](mailto:jparent@nmcc.edu)

Rachel Rice - 768-9568  
[rachel.rice@maine.edu](mailto:rachel.rice@maine.edu)

Terence Kelly - 834-7558  
[terence.kelly@maine.edu](mailto:terence.kelly@maine.edu)

## News Release

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### County to see \$3.5 million investment in higher education and regional economy with passage of bond questions 2 and 3 on November 6 ballot

#### *Regional business and higher education leaders kick-off Aroostook effort to inform public of benefit*

**Aroostook County** - Passage of questions 2 and 3 on the upcoming November 6 ballot would have significant positive impact on Aroostook's economic development efforts and the County's three public institutions of higher education. That was the message of several regional business and community leaders, and the presidents of Northern Maine Community College and the Universities of Maine at Fort Kent and Presque Isle at a press conference held today at the Northern Maine Development Commission in Caribou.

The event served as the official start of efforts in northern Maine to build public awareness for the bond questions that address research and development and public higher education statewide.

"Both the research and development bond and the university and community college bond will provide critical funding for businesses to develop and deploy new technologies while providing physical improvements to our three campuses here in the County. The community colleges and universities not only contribute significantly to the regional economy they are also the core for providing a skilled, educated, and adaptable labor force for regional employers," said Robert Clark, executive director of the Northern Maine Development Commission, who both hosted the press conference and led the discussion on the two ballot initiatives and their impact in Aroostook should they pass.

Question 3 calls for \$43.5 million for interior and exterior building renovations, improvements and additions at all campuses of the Maine Community College System, Maine Maritime Academy and the University of Maine System. Altogether, County institutions would see an investment of more than \$3.5 million in the infrastructure of the three local campuses.

The University of Maine at Presque Isle stands to see \$1.4 million for renovations in Folsom/Pullen Hall, the main classroom and laboratory building on campus. Work planned would include an update of the heating and ventilation system, installation of new energy efficient windows, ADA accessibility improvements, and consideration of air to air heat pumps and solar panels as part of the university's carbon neutral commitment.

"Passage of proposition three will allow the university to take major steps in making our primary classroom building functional for the Twenty-First Century. Original boilers, windows, floors and ceilings in Folsom/Pullen Hall have been little improved since their construction in the 1960's. The renovations will vastly improve the learning atmosphere in the building. They also will improve energy efficiency considerably and provide better accessibility," said UMPI President Donald Zillman. "All of these improvements will bring jobs to the County economy in the short term and allow our students a more productive learning experience in the longer run."

Energy efficiency gains are also at the top of the list of projects to be completed at Northern Maine Community College. Through the bond package, a total of \$758,000 would assist NMCC in funding needed renovations in the Mailman Trades Building and the A.K. Christie Complex. The Mailman facility houses many of the college trade and technical occupation programs. The Christie complex serves as the primary campus classroom facility.

Work at the County's community college would include upgrades to heating and ventilation systems. Students in all programs will also benefit from new classroom technology.

"The funding that would be provided under Question 3 is directed in areas that are critically important to the College's mission of providing an educated and well-trained workforce for the Aroostook economy," said NMCC President Timothy Crowley. "The energy efficiencies will allow us to redirect limited funds that have been used in recent years to offset increasing fuel and related costs. The investment in new technology will ensure that we continuously meet the needs of employers in the region who rely on us to meet their staffing needs, and that their future employees are learning on the current technology and equipment used by the businesses."

In the St. John Valley, \$1.4 million would be directed to the University of Maine at Fort Kent to construct a new classroom building extension adjacent to Nadeau Hall. The facility would provide modern classrooms for student instruction and office space where faculty can prepare weekly class lectures, as well as offer students and faculty alike with state-of-the-art laboratories for research and experimentation.

"The University of Maine at Fort Kent is fortunate to have enjoyed six successive years of enrollment growth, resulting in a student increase of more than 50 percent. As a result, we are pretty close to the limits of our physical capacity. Voter approval of Question 3 will permit us to move forward on a building extension to provide new classrooms, modern laboratories and faculty offices," said UMFK President Richard W. Cost.

The County leaders also used the press conference to speak about the benefits of Question 2 and its potential impact on the region.

“Voter approval of Question 2 will permit the campus to compete for research and development monies to continue local environmental research and to strengthen academic programs focused on special challenges of rural communities across Maine and across America,” said Cost.

Statewide approval of Question 2 would provide \$50 million to the Maine Technology Institute (MTI), which would award – on a competitive basis – research grants for projects related to advancing Maine’s economy. An additional \$3.5 million would be directed to the Finance Authority of Maine, and \$1.5 million is earmarked for the Maine Rural Development Authority.

Faculty, staff and students at Maine’s public universities could apply competitively for grants through MTI that would provide funding for innovation that will help Maine companies stay ahead of the global competition with new products, better and more efficient processes and the development of new materials that are sustainable.

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