

Business Leaders Unveil Criteria for Evaluating LD 1 Proposals Lawmakers Urged to Use Five Common Sense Guidelines to Sort through Reforms February 14, 2011

Statement by Jim Wellehan

Good afternoon. I'm Jim Wellehan, and I'm pleased to be here with a big crowd of people who believe as I do that what's good for Maine's environment is good for Maine's economy. This is a fundamental principle we use in managing our nearly ninety-seven year old and clearly sustainable company.

And it's not just our company. I would say that all well-run, forward-looking companies – especially here in Maine – understand the tight connection between a healthy environment and a healthy economy.

Hannaford, Poland Springs, LL Bean, Tom's of Maine, TD Bank, SAPPI, Prime Tanning, Oakhurst – these are just a few examples of companies that have really stepped out into a leadership role in reducing the environmental impacts of their businesses because it makes environmental and economic sense to do so. And of course, our fishing, farming, recreation and tourist industries are all based on a clean and green Maine.

All of us need to make choices with our children's futures in mind – especially our choices in the legislative process. Ironically, some of the proposed roll-backs will actually drive up business costs. Repealing the informed growth act will encourage sprawl, driving up municipal costs and taxes. Sprawl means more roads to build, maintain, plow, sand, police and provide fire protection. Municipal costs are analogous to the costs of having a paper route; do you want your paper route downtown, or on Rural Route 7? And increasing air pollution and carcinogens will not only harm some of our much loved grandchildren, they will also drive up business health care costs.

If we hope to pass on to future generations a livable world, then we must keep working toward increased integration of our environmental goals and our economic goals. Maine has done a great job in passing important environmental laws. Some may not be perfect – either as written, or implemented. But let's not be foolish enough to just roll them back. That would be pure folly.

My company has worked on sustainability for many years. We began a recycling program in 1993, and now recycle 95% of all the material that comes into our stores. This has reduced our waste management costs to almost zero. We've greatly reduced energy use and energy costs, reducing carbon emissions by 30% from 2003 to 2010. We are committed to a 50% reduction in Green House Gases by 2020, or earlier. We've switched to bio-degradable, vegetable-based plastic shopping bags.

We've done these things and many others to not only lower our demand on the earth's resources, but to lower our costs. Every environmental step that we have taken as a

company has improved our bottom line, and each improvement is a permanent improvement, year after year after year.

I urge individuals, businesses, and the Legislature to make choices that will help ensure a sustainable world for future generations. It sure beats the blazes out of an un-sustainable world. That's why I am pleased to endorse this set of guiding principles for the Legislature, and particularly Principle #5 – that says that any regulatory reform proposal worth enacting “must ensure continued protection of Maine’s air, water, land, wildlife, and the good health of Maine people.”

That's what the public expects, that's what the people in this great hall are demanding, and that's what our lawmakers need to keep in mind throughout this legislative session.