

How would you shape Maine as our next Governor?

Page 1: Help us understand your position on topics important to all Mainers.

Q1 Please state your name.

Alan Caron

Page 2: PLANNING

Q2 What will you do to encourage towns to plan proactively and for the long term, understanding that the environment and rural character are fragile and can be damaged before people take notice?

The character of Maine, in its small towns and natural areas, is one of greatest economic assets. We can never sacrifice it for short-term economic gain. Maine needs to reinvest in our downtowns and villages, encourage growth and development in places that make sense, and protect our natural areas and farms. The state needs to align its resources and investments to protect our quality of place, while creating thriving communities that retain our young people and attract new people to Maine. Maine communities have the opportunity to proactively shape development. Encouraging the development of housing and jobs near infrastructure reduces the cost of public infrastructure and the burden on taxpayers. It also helps reduce sprawl and preserve natural resources and natural areas. The state can and should play an important role in providing communities with the tools, assistance, and resources to grow smart. The template for this has been written in Charting Maine's Future, the report that GrowSmart Maine commissioned while I served as its President. As Governor, I would hard-wire coordination of the funding and policies of the departments of transportation, economic development, housing and community development, and environment. This will provide a supportive environment, incentives, and resources for cities and towns throughout the state who seek to strengthen downtowns and villages while protecting the natural areas that make their communities so special. I will also support growing the role of regional planning agencies, which can play a vital role in helping regions to grow smart.

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Q3 What could you, as Governor, do to support and encourage the kind of community level localism and ruralism that is succeeding in some Maine communities today? (Generally, localism supports local production and consumption of goods, local control of government, and promotion of local culture and local identity. Ruralism is the rural equivalent of new urbanism: creating walkable communities with a range of housing and job types.)

I believe in bottom-up change, driven by the doers and dreamers within Maine's grassroots. Maine has enormous potential right now to build a new prosperity driven by small business innovators and entrepreneurs. Smaller-scale development in all of our communities – from the rural to the urban - is essential to our future and to protecting the character of Maine. Overall, we have to shift the focus of economic development from 'attracting' jobs to 'growing' them here. Then, we should focus on attracting people, rather than companies, who have talent and energy, want to live in a great state like this, and can create new businesses here. It's worth remembering that nearly all of this state's iconic employers, from L.L Bean to Wex to Bath Iron Works, started as small companies and grew over time. In communities across Maine, Mainers are supporting other Mainers who are growing food, brewing beer, and more. To grow Maine's economy, as Governor, I will redirect our half billion in economic development investments toward growing a more decentralized, small business and locally-supported economy. The policies of the past of giving away Maine's tax dollars in tax breaks to big companies has been a dismal failure. I will be a governor who understands that Maine's economy must grow from the ground up – rooted in our communities and our people.

Page 3: THE RURAL ECONOMY

Q4 How will your policies support regrowth of Maine's downtowns so that their heritage, unique rural character and economic value is safeguarded?

I will be a smart growth Governor, who will celebrate Maine's small towns and rural areas and who is committed to implementing Charting Maine's Future. Specifically, I will support the Historic Tax Credit, investments in downtowns, villages, and "ruralism", brownfields redevelopment, and Land for Maine's Future. As mentioned above, I will also structure coordination between the state's economic, environment, transportation, and housing agencies to ensure policies and funding are coordinated to achieve smart growth.

Q5 How will your policy/action support a shift in focus for growth in our rural areas, such as the recent example in the Katahdin Region?

The mills, as they once existed, aren't coming back to Maine. While Mainers would prefer to still have thriving mills, that is not the choice before us. The global economy has forced mechanization of many of those jobs. The economic winners of the future are places that can adapt and innovate, to build on their assets in new ways. In the Katahdin Region, that kind of change is underway. The national monument isn't the answer to all our problems, but it is one piece of a changing economy that will bring more people to that part of Maine and open new opportunities for the region. As Governor, I will be looking to build on the assets – traditional and emerging - in each region to strengthen the economy.

Page 4: TRANSPORTATION

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Q6 Maine is a rural state, which makes efficient public transportation challenging. However, the lack of it makes it more difficult for many people to find and keep jobs and access affordable housing. What will you do to encourage funding and development of more transit solutions both in our rural and urban areas?

Public transportation is a lifeline in rural areas for people that can't drive, like students and elders, and people who don't have cars. Serving rural areas with traditional public transportation is very expensive, so we need to encourage innovation, using technology and models like ITNAmerica and Cumberland Rides, to expand mobility while keeping costs in check. In more urban areas, public transportation is attracting more and more people. For example, in Greater Portland, services have expanded in the last few years, with more service expansions on the horizon. As Governor, I support both a state and federal role in providing resources to build strong regional transit networks. Transportation is also the largest source of climate pollution, and the fastest growing source of emissions. If transportation emissions are not addressed, the growth in climate emissions from transportation will cancel out our work to improve energy efficiency and transition to renewable sources of electricity. I will take a three-pronged approach to curbing transportation emissions. The first is to promote cleaner vehicles. We are on the verge of an explosion of electric vehicles in the marketplace, and I will be a champion for accelerating that market's growth by committing the state to the purchase of electric vehicles. The second is to encourage better land use to create the densities, over the long term, that will support walkable, bikeable communities, a stronger public transportation network, and clean, electric shared mobility. Lastly, I'll champion investment in buses, rail, sidewalks, trails, and bikeways.

Q7 What is your plan for sustainable funding to maintain/repair our transportation system to shift away from the current over-reliance on gas tax and general fund bonds each year?

The maintenance of our transportation network is funded with a combination of federal and state gas taxes, local property taxes, tolls, and state bonds. There is not enough funding to take care of the system we have, never mind build what we need for the future. This issue is compounded by the increasing numbers of electric cars projected to be on our roads, which will reduce gas tax revenues over time. As Governor, I will advocate for the federal government to address the need for more reliable sources of transportation revenue. But, we cannot expect Washington to solve the problem. Therefore, I will also explore the possibility of creating a more rational way to expend our funds that would allow us to use all Maine transportation revenue sources to their highest and best use. By allowing for funding sources to be "flexed" between needs and modes, we will treat Maine's transportation network truly as a network.

Page 5: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Q8 People-to-people connections are increasingly identified as a key determinant of individual health as well as successful community engagement. How would you encourage both our aging population and other Mainers to create connections within their community?

My style of governing is to bring people together. I have a solid track record of successfully doing this. Most recently, in my work with Envision Maine, I have worked to develop a series of issue 'summits', modeled on Grown Smart Maine's summits, to bring people together to talk about building the rural economy, boosting the innovation economy, adapting the economy for climate change, and education. I have spent many years bringing diverse groups together and encouraging dialog and connection. This is the style of governance I will bring to the Blaine House. I will set a climate of respect and openness that encourages people of different views to listen to each other, learn from each other and build relationships and trust. We will be both visionary and practical at the same time.

Q9 Broadband infrastructure is critical to Maine's economic future and the personal well being of Mainers. Who should determine access to the internet – communities or companies?

I believe that broadband is the infrastructure of the future, just as railroads and roads, electrification and phones were in the past, and that it is crucial to the future of rural communities in Maine. Over 30,000 rural Mainers do not have adequate broadband service, and we need to ensure that they are connected to the world. We cannot build a new prosperity for all of Maine without that.

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Page 6: ENERGY

Q10 What are the pillars of your energy policy? How will you prioritize energy efficiency? How do you define renewable energy and what role will it play in your energy policy? Please touch on transmission as well as production and usage of energy.

It is long past time Maine should dedicate itself to being a solar and renewable energy leader in America. We must set Maine on a path toward energy independence, with solar in the lead. With three-quarters of Maine's homes heated with oil and many Mainers driving long distances to their jobs, we have a dangerous and expensive vulnerability that costs us as much as five billion dollars a year that we send to oil and gas producers around the world. We are on the verge of a truly historic shift in energy use in Maine that will enable us to produce more energy here, from the sun, water, wind and wood. Solar is where the truly disruptive technology is opening new opportunities for Maine. We get as much solar energy each year as does southern France. New breakthroughs in battery technology and solar shingles and window design are going to make solar the leading source of energy in Maine within a few decades, if we have the leadership and skill to seize that opportunity. It is power that can be placed on the roof of every new house built in Maine within a decade and retrofitted to many others as well. And it can reduce our need for big power plants and expensive transmission lines. I will be the best champion for energy independence and solar power that has ever served in the Blaine House.

Page 7: SCHOOL FUNDING AND TAXATION

Q11 What are your thoughts on the pros and cons of using property tax dollars as a basis for school funding. What are other options and how would they shape Maine's development patterns and our economy?

The basis of school funding should be the General Fund of the State of Maine. We should do what the voters have asked us to do. I support the long established goal of the state paying 55% of the cost of K-12 education. At the local level, there is no other source besides the property tax that can bear the costs of quality local education. I am open to new ideas in that area, but we must be careful not to trend toward any kind of user fee that would work against lower income areas.

Page 8: GOVERNANCE

Q12 GrowSmart Maine facilitates people working together to reach better solutions for their communities. What will your administration do to build an effective relationship with the Legislature that listens and responds to the differing voices of Maine communities?

Maine has enormous potential right now to build a new prosperity. But we cannot seize those opportunities as long as we're mired in endless partisan food fights and ancient feuds. Both parties are elevating 'fighters' in their primaries, who are promising to 'win' against the other party. This is exactly what we cannot any longer endure. We need a style of leadership that respects differences, that appreciates good ideas and common sense wherever it comes from and from whatever party it originates. We need leadership that doesn't insult Maine people or their motives and that unites us rather than divides us. Only that style of leadership can help us find common ground and practical opportunities to move forward. Nearly every candidate will talk about bringing people together, or working in a bipartisan way. But the question is 'who has actually done that'? I have spent the last fifteen years bringing thousands of people together, across party lines and geographical differences, to listen to each other respectfully, to focus on the future and on where they might agree, and to build relationships. This is a crucial skill of effective leaders in the 21st century.

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Q13 Thanks for taking GrowSmart Maine's survey! We'll be sure to get your answers out to our members and friends right away. If you have anything more you'd like to tell us, feel free to send us a file as shown below. Thanks again.

Respondent skipped this question
