

Bangor Daily News

Exports growth to pull Maine out of recession

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ROCKPORT, Maine — Speakers at the Trade Day 2010 conference on Thursday had one theme in common: Maine is doing a fine job exporting goods and is on track to do more. Increasing exports is one way to pull America — and Maine — out of the recession, according to keynote speaker Patricia Mears, the director of international commercial affairs of the National Association of Manufacturers.

“Domestic demand is going to be slow in the U.S. Real growth is outside of the U.S.,” Mears said during her talk. “Ninety-five percent of the world’s consumers live outside the United States.”

As for Maine, Mears said it is in a unique position. Most states do not have an international view of the world, she said, but because Maine shares a border with Canada, Maine companies tend to think outside of country lines already.

“Maine should be doing what Maine is doing,” she said. This includes working on exporting natural resources, working on wood composites and creating international ties.

In his remarks, Gov. John Baldacci said more than 24,000 workers are employed in Maine by foreign companies with \$6.2 million invested in property and equipment here. Baldacci said he hopes Maine can lure more jobs and investments from Asian markets. He said this could be accomplished by becoming more aggressive in harnessing natural resources, working to bring international students to Maine schools and more.

One of the state’s best resources is its work force, the governor said.

“Maine people and Maine companies truly do a wonderful job selling their talents and products abroad,” he said. “We know we have the best work force, the most creative people and the know-how.”

Janine Bisailon-Cary, president of the Maine International Trade Center, which put on the event at the Samoset Resort, said Maine’s international exports grew 69 percent between 2000 and 2008.

“Exports represent job growth. They represent diversity for our economy. It’s where our manufacturers are growing,” she said, adding that Maine did \$3 billion in exports last year. “This has been one of our continuous growth areas.”

During the conference, the Maine International Trade Center also presented its annual awards:

- Exporter of Year: Fluid Imaging Technologies
- Service Provider of the Year: Sprague Energy Corp
- International Innovator of the Year: Lighthouse Imaging Corp
- International Investor of the Year: TransCanada
- President's Award: Ruth Greene
- Future Global Leader Award: Leah Swan