

First, let me thank Roger Hale for that kind introduction. I am grateful that he has decided to join my team and head my Workforce Council. Roger, thank you for your service.

I also want to thank the President of Ridgewater College, Colleen Thompson. Your help was instrumental in making this event happen but more importantly, the commitment this college has made to the city of Hutchinson is a model. Thank you and keep up the good work.

Back in 1996, Money Magazine called Hutchinson, and I quote "one of the hottest small towns in the country offering solid jobs and a healthy median income."

I figured out why.

Because when you call up Marlin Torgenson, the Mayor of Hutchinson, his message recorder gives you a quote from Will Rogers that says, "Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there."

That is exactly the kind of message I came out here to deliver today.

It is the same kind of message that I gave to

Earl Wilson, my Commissioner of Economic Security
Carlson, Commissioner of Trade and Economic Development
Gretchen Maglich, Commissioner of Labor & Industry and
Dean Barkley, Director of Planning.

I told them to put their heads together with the folks from MnSCU and the U and figure out where this state is going in workforce development.

This group took a good hard look at what the state has been doing to develop our workforce and why. It became obvious some things needed to change and we needed to have some goals. The goals are very straightforward and they serve as the foundation for a statewide response to Minnesota's greatest challenge - and opportunity as a viable competitor on the global stage.

First, we recognize that we don't just need more workers -- we need skilled, flexible workers. Second, we want to upgrade the skills of our workers AND increase their personal income. Everyone in this room needs to recognize and take seriously the role that Minnesota plays in the global market.

I found out the other day that all the Scotch Tape and Magic Tape in the world is made right here in Hutchinson Minnesota. 3M made an investment in this community, and we have an obligation to make sure 3M has the best possible workers to keep them competitive. If we don't focus on that goal, the growth our economy is experiencing will stop and the world will pass us by.

By the way, half of the world's supply of RED TAPE seems to be made in Washington DC and the other half in St. Paul.

Our two basic goals for workforce development are supported by four strategies.

First, the state needs to re-examine its role in workforce development and encourage communities to do the same. That means creating a cooperative environment between all the players. It also means getting rid of some old notions about workforce development. Educators, employers, and government need to work together to ensure that worker's skills match the needs of employers. Hutchinson is already doing what I'm talking about in a couple of different ways.

Ridgewater College, under President Thompson's leadership works directly with employers in the area to determine their needs and turns around and develops classes to support the employers' needs.

The Hutchinson Chamber of Commerce works with a consortium of school districts in the area to get high school teachers to visit area businesses once a month to help them understand the business needs.

We ought to encourage communities to keep talking with each other and create their own solutions that work. We realize that each community may come up with a unique plan but that is what this first strategy is all about. We want to challenge all the players to re-examine workforce issues and set achievable goals.

The second strategy for the state is to identify and support the industries with the best potential for growth -- and the greatest need for workers.

Hutchinson, as a city, did this a few years ago by developing a strategy that would focus on attracting High Tech employers. After creating their vision statements they made it as easy as possible for business to build in the community by reducing red tape...

Notice I did not say SCOTCH TAPE so let me talk about that other kind of tape for a minute. Hutchinson created a one-stop shop for building developments. All the players are brought together in a room so the new business can take care of all their city issues from telephone hook-ups to building permits. Cutting the red tape is a lesson every level of government should learn. Since I am on the topic of red tape, our third strategy is to eliminate at the state level, obsolete or redundant training programs. If it doesn't work -- or no longer applies -- don't fix it....get rid of it.

If two or more programs do the same thing, consolidate and maximize the money we are spending. I want to reward innovation. I want the state to work with communities to come up with innovative solutions and have the resources to reward those innovative solutions.

Any workforce development program funded by the state will be scrutinized to make sure that it is doing what it is supposed to be doing and meeting the community's needs.

Hennepin County has 114 training programs alone. The MN Business Partnership and the MN Chamber say that business in Minnesota spends up to \$6 billion to meet their own training needs. Let me tell you, there is a new Sheriff in town and I expect some results and some integration. I want to maximize the state investment while recognizing government's limitation. My Commissioners and Mr. Hale will be playing a very key role in this strategy.

The final piece of our workforce strategy is about promoting the fact that Minnesota has excellent career opportunities with long-term potential for growth.

The state recently launched a new web site called "I SEEK" for people who want to find out where the jobs are or learn more about career planning and training. But career planning has to start as early as possible.

This strategy must reach kids in Minnesota. I want them to know that good jobs are waiting for them and the options are endless. If they stay in high school and take the time to plan, they can choose any number of career paths that will provide them with a good wage and a good job with the possibility for advancement.

Whether a kid excels in shop class or economics, both of those skills are needed to keep Minnesota a global competitor.

Over the next month, this core group of Commissioners standing with me today will work with Roger Hale and members of my newly appointed Governor's Workforce Council to broaden these four strategies and develop the basis for my legislative agenda on Workforce Development.

In closing, let me commend people like Mayor Torgenson, City Administrator Gary Plotz, Dick Lennes, Vi Mayer and The President of Ridgeview College for their outstanding work to make Hutchinson such a success story.

I agree with Mayor Torgeson, we are on the right track; unemployment is low, the economy is strong, but if we don't keep moving forward, we'll get run over.