

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Japan-America Society and the American Chamber of Commerce. Thank you for inviting me. It's a distinct pleasure to be here. I remember last time I was in Japan, wearing my tights and my feather boa –  
(STOPS HIMSELF)

That was then. And it was a good time back then. But this is now. As we say back home in the states, "It's a new day. It's a new ball game."

(HE SAYS THE EQUIVALENT PHRASE IN JAPANESE) "It's a new day."

Let me start over. It was a "new ball game" in Minnesota when we took office in January 1999. Back then I was fond of saying, "We shocked the world." And it was true. Nobody expected us to win.

Maybe we also shocked ourselves ... with the huge opportunity that was now right in front of us. In Minnesota today there is great momentum for change. People want to shake up the old political system and to try new things. They want new ideas. And we have those new ideas ... along with the energy and the boldness to make them a reality.

Our emphasis on self-sufficiency appeals to the people of Minnesota. They want to "do" for themselves – not rely on others ... not look elsewhere for answers. They don't want to wait on distant levels of government, or on planners who are thousands of miles away. What they want is what everybody wants.

They want healthy and vital communities both rural and urban ... communities that are inclusive and cooperative. They want smart growth that will contain urban sprawl. They want a public educational system that is second to none. They want an intelligently designed transportation system that will serve us for decades. They want agriculture that is competitive worldwide. They want up-to-the-minute telecommunications, an information highway that leaves no community excluded. They want lean, responsive government that serves them and doesn't get in the way.

As I said, we face a huge opportunity. And we're determined not to blow our chance ... not let this opportunity slip through our fingers.

So, what about this trip to Japan?

Let's say "Time flies when you're having fun." And this week has been so much fun it seems like we just got here. It's impossible that our visit in Japan is nearly over. We've had a most wonderful experience.

When I took office, I knew that one primary effort would be to promote Minnesota as a competitor on the world stage. We were more than a medium size state in the middle of the country. Much more. If we were to succeed and prosper in the world economy, we had to start looking at ourselves as almost a country within a country. We had to evaluate our strengths and

our opportunities in the world arena. We had to stand up there nose-to-nose with the best in the world.

Economic globalization demands that of us. And economic globalization is a fact of life. If we do not prepare, we will be left behind.

After the election the first thing I did was start asking questions. I asked everybody: Where should we go FIRST to start promoting Minnesota as a world class competitor? The answer was unanimous. GO TO JAPAN. Japan is the future.

That's why we packed up our show, and put on our best clothes, and came here. This trip has been a huge success. We've learned a lot about Japan. We've met old friends and renewed acquaintances. We've met many new people and made many new friends.

What have I seen? There's so much. But let me touch a few of the highlights. Let me share a few memories with you.

Last Wednesday, our first day here, was Culture Day. What luck for us to come on such a day because of what we could participate in. We were honored to be present as you honored special people for their cultural activities. I'd like to see us have a day like this in Minnesota.

The Sumo temple shrine in Monzen-nakacho was a great treat for me. Such big men. We would say "The have big shoes to fill."

"Boku yori ookii." "Sugoi!!" ("bigger than mine/me. Far out!")

I was pleased to see the Warren McKenzie pottery exhibit. It's beautiful work, and it's always a pleasure to see that a Minnesotan has gained such favor abroad.

As you know, I'm a Kyoiku-Papa (KYOH-ee-koo-Papa) not just for my own children but for the entire State of Minnesota. I've seen that school kids here are the same as they are back at home. They're happy and they do well when their parents take an interest in their education and when they're encouraged ... when everyone believes that education is important.

My wife Terry and I have been particularly impressed with the kinds of things Japan does with her schools. A belief in the power of education is one of the values that are shared by the people of Japan and the people of Minnesota.

Japanese transportation is another area I'm very much interested in. The fantastic Advanced Traffic Information Service we saw this morning was most impressive. It's an example of technology put to the best possible use in helping make human lives safer and happier and more manageable. This afternoon I'm going to ride the Bullet Train to Osaka. I'm really looking forward to that.

In the Twin Cities we're facing major decisions regarding our transportation systems. How fortunate that Transportation Commissioner Elwyn Tinklenberg and I could observe first-hand the ways in which you apply your considerable Japanese ingenuity and know-how to the solving of your transportation problems. I'm sure our people will be back with many more questions. They were very impressed.

When I get home, people will ask me: What did I learn on this trip? I learned ... once again ... that I really like Japan. It's a beautiful and fascinating country. An honorable country. A hardworking country. A country that thinks. A country that keeps looking for a better way. A country and people who keep searching tirelessly for the perfect product, the best solution.

I learned ... once again ... that the Japanese people are warm and receptive to strangers. They opened their doors and they opened their hearts to us. They made us feel that we were welcome and honored guests.

I learned that Japan and Minnesota have many things in common. We are people who strive for excellence in what we do and what we make. We take our responsibilities to each other seriously ... just as we take seriously our respect and our responsibilities to our elders.

Japanese and Minnesotans are both people who value our children and our children's education because we value our future. We both make sacrifices for our children and for the future of everyone.

Both Japanese and Minnesotans are optimistic people. We believe that tomorrow can be better than today and yesterday. We believe that we can solve problems. We believe it's the people themselves, not the government, who are the source of the energy and initiative and spirit that produces a better life for us all.

I also learned that the Japanese people share our conviction that Minnesota and Japan have a vast potential for partnership. I learned that we were right in coming to Japan in order to build long-term relationships. We came here to seek out long-term partnerships, not merely short-run opportunistic dealings.

This has been much more than just a trip. We were not merely tourists who were seeing the sights and snapping pictures. We were doing business. We were promoting our wares. As governor I was here as a salesman to sell our state.

We told our story of what Minnesota offers to Japan.

We displayed our agricultural wares. Safe, reliable, healthy food, and plenty of it. I've said this before: Our expert Minnesota farmers can grow you anything you want. On this trip we announced a significant agreement to send 100,000 pounds of Minnesota pork every week directly to Japan. We're very happy with this agreement and we know Japan will be happy too.

On this trip we showed our technology wares. Already our technology exports to Japan are very important to us ... especially computer technology, and medical technology, and medical devices.

Overall more than 600 Minnesota companies trade with Japan, including such well known names as Cargill, 3M, Andersen Windows, Ecolab, Medtronic. On this trip we showed many products to new prospective Japanese buyers. They liked what they saw.

Now, as we prepare to leave for home tomorrow, we extend our invitation for you in Japan to come see us. Last year 62,000 travelers came to Minnesota from Japan. That's the largest single group of travelers from anywhere in the world.

We'd like you to consider Minnesota when you're looking at investments in the U.S. We're in the geographic center of the continent, easy to get to. We have highly skilled labor, excellent transportation, and a safe and clean environment. At work, Minnesotans have a "can-do" attitude that means we go out of our way not to make problems but to solve them.

If you come as a tourist you're in for a treat. The state is beautiful ... from the North Woods to the southern farmland. We have 15,000 lakes, and more shoreline than California, Florida, and Hawaii combined. We're known to have the best fresh-water fishing in the world. And that's no "fish-story." I guarantee it.

I know golf is popular in Japan. In Minnesota we have more than 450 public golf courses, and they're very low priced. You can play every day all day if you want to. And I might even be there to play with you.

Like Japanese, Minnesotans love their trees and parks and flowers. Come in the spring or summer and you'll see flowers everywhere. All kinds and colors.

Come in the winter and enjoy our skiing and snowmobiling and all kinds of winter sports.

All year around our big cities have everything you could want in a big city. We have art, music, restaurants, museums, theaters. And you'll be safe in Minnesota. We have a very low crime rate, and we treat tourists like honored guests.

Minnesota is a fabulous place to live, and a fabulous place to visit. As we say: "come early and stay late." We'll be glad to see you. And we'll give you the same warm welcome you gave us in this past week.

Tomorrow we go back home. I want to thank everyone for the wonderful trip we've had. To quote your master traveler and poet Basho ( buh-SHOW ): On one of his walking tours of Japan he wrote:

"Each twist in the road brought new sights, each dawn renewed my inspiration."

That has been our experience, and we thank you for it.

There's another line he wrote upon saying farewell to an old friend in Nara. And I love this image because it could be a farewell image from Minnesota as well:  
"Now, like the buck's antlers," he wrote, " we face in slightly different directions, my friend."

Let me complete that image with my last thought – a haiku.

The plane waits  
We leave friends and turn toward home  
The future looks great

Thank you.