

Good morning.

I'm happy to be here, especially since no one's going to tell me I've got ten minutes to talk to you, then hustle me onto a bus and send to me five towns in the next half hour.

But just to give you an idea of my tour this week, I began by getting up at 5 o'clock in the morning, flew to Willmar, did a town meeting, met with the editorial board of the West Central Tribune, had coffee with Trena in Clara City, went shopping in downtown Granite Falls, stopped by the Farmers' Co-op grain elevator in Cottonwood, had lunch with the Rotary Club in Marshall, visited with the kids at Murray County Schools in Slayton, toured a telephone company in Fulda, had a meeting with the mayors and city councils of Windom, Jackson and Lakefield, and in between met with 5 mayors and did interviews with at least 10 reporters.

And that was Day One.

Actually, for someone who's spent the past two days touring a large part of the state on a breakneck schedule, I'm very invigorated.

I'm invigorated because the people of Minnesota have emphatically confirmed my vision of what they want my administration to concentrate on: Telecommunications reform, transportation reform and government reform.

So I'm glad to be here this morning to talk a little about those issues with *you*, the leaders who can help make things happen.

When I introduced my Big Plan for the State of Minnesota in October I said that future success in Minnesota will depend heavily on our ability to strengthen our regional cities, like some of the ones I just visited.

I said that we need healthy and vital communities in greater Minnesota in order to provide opportunity and hope for families that want to live and work in the comfort and beauty of rural Minnesota.

On my trip this week, I spoke with a lot of mayors, community leaders and citizens, and in each conversation I emphasized how important it is for us to work together to build those healthy and vital communities.

I emphasized how important it is that all Minnesota towns and cities are connected by good roads.

I emphasized how important it is that all Minnesota towns and cities be connected by high-speed telecommunications networks.



And finally, I emphasized how important it is that the people of all Minnesota towns and cities have the opportunity to actively engage in their government without hassle, without barriers, and without confusion.

My commissioners have been working hard, together, to develop very specific proposals that will give life to the principles, values and visions of my Big Plan.

They have developed an initiative that will finally give you the relief you deserve from paying ridiculously high amounts of money for your car license tabs.

On Monday I announced a transportation plan that will not only give you tax relief but will finally put the sales tax you pay when you buy a car into a transportation and transit fund that will go to building a system that is good for all of Minnesota.

Another very important proposal that my commissioners have worked to develop is my Telecommunications Strategic Initiative that is designed to create competition and make sure that everyone in Minnesota has access to state-of-the-art high speed technology.

And finally, in our effort to provide the infrastructure we'll need to have healthy and vital economic centers throughout Minnesota, we are not forgetting that to be successful, we need a government that will be;

Simple, so that you can easily, without hassle and confusion, follow the legislative path of these proposals,

Accessible, so that if you choose to participate in the actual legislative process you are given that opportunity with relative ease, and

Accountable, so that when the dust has settled and the votes are taken it is done in full view of the people.

That government, in my view, is a single house, unicameral legislature.

In less than one month the legislature will convene to consider three very important issues:

Telecommunications reform—that will help bring a whole new world of opportunity to cities all over Minnesota,

Transportation reform—that will cut taxes on tabs and create new sources of revenue for improved highways in Minnesota, and

Government reform—that will bring more accountability, easier access and save millions of tax dollars by going to a single house legislature.



I urge you to get involved, because in the end it is the people who must decide. And when it comes to how you are governed, it is imperative that you be able to decide.

We have great cities in Minnesota. Cities with reputations for hard working people, good schools, good health care systems, and advanced telecommunications capabilities.

We have plenty to be proud of, but looking ahead there is always more to do. Everyday the world changes and presents new challenges:

But working together and working hard, we will not fail.

Thank you.

And now I will be happy to take some questions.