

Good Morning.

It's my honor to begin my Red River Valley Bus Tour in the All-American City of Moorhead.

In naming you as an All-American City, the National Civic League cited your civic spirit, and "the ability of citizens, government, businesses and non-profit organizations to work together."

I congratulate you for setting a good example for Minnesota and for the entire United States.

In life, as in sports, the All-Americans are the players that do the extraordinary. And it is clear that Moorhead is a community of extraordinary people.

Having faced disaster after disaster, you keep your sights forward and have faith in the future.

The floods you experienced in '93 and '97 certainly challenged your spirit, but you met the challenge. And now, in this new millennium you are challenged again.

And again you will meet the challenge.

I want you to know that in your battle to overcome natural disasters, state government is your partner.

And toward that effort, yesterday, I declared a State of Emergency in Clay and thirteen other Northwestern Minnesota Counties.

But as we work together to overcome yet another natural disaster, we must look forward with a comprehensive economic development goal that will help diversify the rural economy in Minnesota.

I go on these bus trip to help understand, and to learn, so that I can do a better job of governing.

I want to be educated about sugar beets - because agriculture accounts for 20 percent of Minnesota's economy and they are so important to your local economy.

I want to work with you on projects that will benefit your economic development and bring economic security to your region.

I want to work with you on telecommunications reform, multi-modal transportation development and a higher education system to meet the needs of our new economy.

Some of you may have participated in a listening post we held last December in East Grand Forks.

We learned a lot from that meeting.

We found out that economic development leaders, planners and regular citizens in the northwest region of Minnesota are concerned about diversifying the local economy, providing decent wages and setting a fair level of taxes.

Some talked about value-added agriculture, highway needs, sewer and water infrastructure and telecommunications.

Others want to do more to keep college graduates in the area and improve health care for the elderly.

Your ideas are where it begins.

That's why I've directed the Department of Trade and Economic Development to work with other state agencies on a plan to ensure that regional priorities are considered in my recommendations for the biennial budget.

That plan moves into action next month at the Rural Summit in Rochester - when decision-makers from around the state will identify the top priorities in each of the six regions outside of the metro.

It may surprise you to know that over the past decade the state has invested more than \$180 million on economic development in northwestern Minnesota.

In Moorhead - over the past five years alone:

We funded more than \$350,000 in enterprise zone tax credits that have helped lower the cost of doing business on THIS side of the Red River.

We've provided more than \$4.5 million in wastewater treatment and clean water infrastructures to help Moorhead and the surrounding communities rebuild and grow

After the '97 flood, our Small Business counselors helped hundreds of area businesses prepare loan packages and assess their futures

We've helped upgrade the skills of your workforce through our Job Skills Partnership grants for customized training programs at Northwest Technical College

Working with Minnesotans after a disaster is sure thing.

But working with Minnesotans on a consistent basis to improve our competitive position in a global economy, while mitigating the effects of future disaster, should be our greatest goal.

We are all in this together, and we need each other.

But let's look into the future and see the big picture.

Moorhead and the entire northwest region of Minnesota are part of my Big Plan for economic development.

You have demonstrated time after time the qualities it takes to move forward and meet the goals of my Big Plan. If there is a role model for a—

- *Healthy and Vital Community* you certainly are.

How have you done it? By—

- Displaying a *Self-Sufficiency* that begins with hard work.

By improving your—

- *Systems to service* your region.

And diversifying your economy to better position yourself as a—

- *Global Competitor*.

You have a lot going for you.

That's why you are an All-American City and I am proud to be your Governor.

Thank you.

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I'll be happy to answer a few questions.

Also, I have the state's Emergency Management Director, Kevin Leier with me today so if you have any question about the state role in the flooding we can try to answer those as well.

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