

Thank you Mr. Mayor,

It's great to be here with you today.

This really is the land of lakes—412 within 25 miles. You even have your own great beach, right here. Who needs Kona?

It too bad that I'm a little too early for We Fest or your 4th of July celebration. I'll have to have a talk with my scheduler!

Detroit Lakes is really a well-rounded city, with lots to offer your residents and your visitors. But today, I want to focus on tourism

Detroit Lakes is a great example of how tourism can be part of the economic mix for a city or area. You've got manufacturing, printing and retail providing jobs and income, and you're building on that base with tourism.

Did you know that travel and tourism is now the leading industry in the world? Last year it generated over \$3.7 trillion in revenues world wide.

Statewide, tourism is a \$10 billion industry. Its economic benefits to the state are comparable to those of agriculture. So cities like Detroit Lakes and its neighboring communities have something to gain by inviting travelers to explore your lakes and towns.

I want to commend Detroit Lakes for the initiatives you're taking to expand your appeal to new markets of travelers. The state has launched two new tourism marketing efforts that Detroit Lakes is a part of.

The Minnesota Office of Tourism has a new effort underway to attract travelers here for bird watching and other wildlife observation. There was an insert on Minnesota wildlife in the Audubon magazine this spring, and the Tourism Office has brought travel and wildlife writers here to visit some of our prime bird watching spots.

One of the most interesting efforts developed by Minnesota communities to bring in travelers interested in wildlife is the new Pine to Prairie Birding Trail. Detroit Lakes has been active in this project, and is the southern anchor of this 200 mile, multi-community effort. I hear you've got a great new brochure coming out next month. This new birding trail is an exciting, creative marketing project, and I wish you great success with it.

Another new initiative is the Scenic Byway program. We now have 19 routes in the state designated as scenic byways. Travelers rank scenic touring as one of their favorite activities, and we see the scenic byway program as a way to pinpoint our scenic highlights for visitors. The

Tourism Office is developing a marketing program to get the word out about our beautiful drives.

Detroit Lakes is the western anchor of the Lake Country Scenic Byway. It also takes in the Park Rapids, Walker and Lake Itasca areas.

I encourage you to take full advantage of this new designation, and let your visitors know about your scenic byway.

And I hear you've got some good things going on in town, as well.

I think the new Ah-nish-a-NAH-bee Culture Center and Gallery will be a great way to share the art and culture of the Anishinabe community with a broader audience.

And new restaurants like Portofino's will also appeal to your visitors.

New endeavors like these keep a city healthy and vibrant. They help make it a fun and interesting place to live.

From a tourism perspective, of course, places like these help draw travelers to your town. But maybe even more important, they become amenities for your city's own residents, and add to the quality of life in town.

Farming, of course, is also part of the local and state economy.

But farming's facing some special challenges right now.

I think one of the most interesting things I've heard about to boost farm income is in the area of agricultural tourism.

I heard about the new effort of six farms in this area to offer tours and promote them through a new ag-tourism brochure. Dairy cows, hogs, maple syruping, and emus (one of our newest farm commodities) now have potential as tourism draws.

And the entertainment offered on one of the farms is a bonus. I'm sorry I missed the hog calling champion of the world earlier this summer. These are clever new marketing efforts in an area of tourism that's still new to Minnesota.

One of the things the Tourism Office keeps telling communities is that they can really boost their impact if they work together. The new Lakes Country Cultural Cruise brochure is a really good example of that, doing joint packaging to draw travelers to the historic and cultural sites in this area.

You folks are doing really good work in the tourism area. I'm very impressed.

I'm Minnesota's biggest booster, so I think it's very interesting to see how communities are out there promoting themselves.

Thanks for having me here today, and showing me all the new tourism efforts going on. I wish I could do all of those fun things while I'm here.

You know I enjoy fishing and golfing, and those are two of your star attractions here, so I regret not having time to check out your lakes and links.

You've got a great place to live and work, and a great place to invite travelers to.

Thank you for your wonderful hospitality and I surely hope you will invite us back.