



Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to be here in northeastern Minnesota -- the land of lakes, pines and mines!

- I'm here to tell you today that mining is alive and well in Minnesota . . . that we're not dwelling on the past, but looking to the future . . . that the State of Minnesota is encouraging development of its mineral resources for companies that want to operate in an environmentally responsible way.
- Hard rock mining in Minnesota is a \$1.5 billion a year industry employing 20,000 people in more than 200 communities throughout the state. It is a vital segment of our state's economy ranking right along with agriculture, forest products and computer technology.
- I have declared this to be "Mining Awareness Week in Minnesota," reaffirming the state's commitment to this essential sector of our economy.
- Perhaps my visit here today will help the rest of Minnesota understand that mining is not dead, or dying here in the northern part of our state. To the contrary, northeastern Minnesota is indeed looking to "*New Horizons.*"
- Ladies and gentlemen, we are excited by the prospects for a whole new era of mining in Minnesota. Mining for platinum and palladium used in catalytic converters, fuel cells and other high tech applications. Mining for gold ... for copper ... and for nickel. Indeed, we are literally sitting on North America's largest known deposits of these precious and base metals.
- I'm optimistic about this. And, I believe that these "non-ferrous" minerals can be harvested economically using new technology without smokestacks and smelters.
- Certainly, our *iron* mining industry has had a history of ups and downs since the first loads of red ore -- hematite -- were shipped from the Vermillion Range back in 1884.
- We've since established a robust taconite mining industry that produces much of the raw material needed to make this nation's steel.
- Mining does matter. There is a lot of truth in the Iron Mining Association slogan: "We Help Build America Everyday."
- Likewise, the State of Minnesota, by way of the IRRRB, the DNR, DTED, the University and others, is working with our taconite companies to help produce the lowest cost and highest quality iron pellets.

- We are also vigorously pursuing the potential for "value-added" iron and steel products to be made right here in northeastern Minnesota.
- After all, there is a more than ample reserve of taconite across the Iron Range to keep our plants going, and *growing* for the foreseeable future -- if we do what is right to keep our companies competitive in a fierce global marketplace.
- There is no shortage of taconite. In fact there's enough for at least another 200 years. Let's not let happen to iron and steel what has happened to oil and other commodities. These are basic American and Minnesota industries!
- You may be hearing that it is no longer possible to site or permit new mining facilities in North America, or Wisconsin, or Minnesota. That there is too much risk and expense -- a gauntlet of red tape, regulations and permitting hurdles.
- Ladies and gentlemen, times are changing in government, too. (Perhaps, I'm the best example of that.) My commissioners, who are with me here today, are committed to making possible what may seem impossible.
- Certainly, our requirements for environmental protection need to be met. But we think that good operators, committed to doing right by the environment, using modern technology, can be permitted in Minnesota
- Are there incentives available from the State of Minnesota? The answer is "yes." In fact, there is a fund that few people seem to be aware of, called the *Minnesota Minerals 21st Century Fund*.
- This fund is proof that the State of Minnesota is willing to put its money where its mouth is. Funds that will help propel Minnesota toward a "new era" of sustained taconite mining and other minerals development.
- Now, I'd like to introduce Jerry Carlson, who is my commissioner of Trade and Economic Development. Jerry will tell you more about our overall economic development efforts, as well as the Minnesota Minerals 21st Century Fund ...

Thank you.