

*(Introduced by Nancy Libersky, Chair of WTW event)*

Thank you, Nancy. I'm honored to be here today to celebrate the achievements of these award winners.

- Harmony Enterprises
- Estrada Foods
- and Skyline Displays deserve our recognition - and our gratitude -- because their success is also our success.

Companies like these are making Minnesota a world-class competitor in the global economy. I applaud you -- and I promise you -- that I am doing everything I can to expand export opportunities for all Minnesota businesses - around the world.

- That's why I went to Japan my first year in office - and to Canada and Mexico last year. We made new friends, opened many doors and strengthened our relationships with key trading partners.
- And our timing couldn't have been better. We released annual export statistics today that show Minnesota's manufactured exports to Canada grew by nearly 12 percent last year. - to more than \$2.4 billion.  
And Mexico moved into the ranks of Minnesota's top ten markets, taking over eighth place with exports of nearly \$400 million.
- So this year - I'm not about to slow down.

This morning, at the Canadian consulate, I announced I'll be heading back to Canada in July on a tourism and trade mission to Winnipeg and Toronto. Let's face it -- we export more to Canada than we do to our next three largest markets combined -- and one visit just isn't enough. Canada is also our good friend and neighbor - we need to see more of each other.

I'd like to thank Consul General Susan Thompson for inviting me to the consulate for what turned out to be an historic event. No governor of Minnesota had ever been there before!

Consul General - thank you for the privilege of being first.

- But Canada is not the only country I'll be visiting this year.

Today's conference is focused on a nation that will soon be joining the U.S., Canada, and more than a hundred other nations in the World Trade Organization - the People's Republic of China.

We've all heard a lot about China lately. But I will tell you this:

- Nothing has happened in recent weeks to change my mind about the importance of free and open trade relations with China.



- Now more than ever - I am convinced we **MUST** work to strengthen our ties with China in all areas, including trade. It's a simple fact - you can't build a relationship with anyone until you get the time - and *take* the time - to know them.
- China is Minnesota's third largest trading partner.

Minnesota's exports to China increased more than 88 percent over the past five years -- and they are projected to grow significantly in the years to come.

China *is* the number one marketing opportunity of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And we *will* be going to China this fall.

Finally - a reminder to Minnesota companies who would like to join us in China. There are still a few openings available, so be sure to pick up an application today.

Now - we're honored to have with us members of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, or the CCPIT, led by Vice Chairman Wan. The CCPIT will be hosting our mission to China in November.

Vice Chairman Wan is a senior economist who has held a number of distinguished positions in the Chinese government. He has served as the Vice Chairman of the CCPIT and the China Chamber of International Commerce since February 2000. Please join me in welcoming Vice Chairman Wan.