

Thank you for asking me to come to the Urban Land Institute Spring Council Forum.

With about 10 days left in our Legislative session, I can honestly tell you, it's a pleasure to be here and not at the capitol.

I want to take a few minutes, and tell you why I got involved in politics, talk about the state, our reforms, and convince you that if investing in Minnesota will lead to success.

In 1990, the people who ran Brooklyn Park were talking about destroying a large piece of environmentally important wetland.

In 1998, I ran for Governor because I thought I could do a better job of laying out a comprehensive vision for our state—but I only made two promises.

First, to return surpluses that are result of over taxation and second, to limit spending.

As a mayor, I was not a fan of the Metropolitan Council. My feeling was that they spent too much time telling us what to do, and too little time actually helping us to build a better community.

When I ran for Governor, I knew the Council had to be changed. When I appointed Ted Mondale as chair, I directed him to change the focus of the Council, to be a positive, problem-solving agency, that helped our mayors, city councils and citizens plan for the future.

After hearing his speech today, I'm sure you'd agree that he's been very successful. Thanks Ted.

Traditionally, Minnesotan's don't like to toot their own horn, but let me tell you, Minnesota is great.

We think of Minnesota as the best place to grow a business because of high-skilled workers and, because of significant tax cuts during my first two years in office, a supportive tax climate.

And, if the legislature follows my lead this session, Minnesota will have an even more receptive tax climate for business.

In addition, Minnesota is:

- The best place to retire because of affordable, accessible health care and housing options;

- The best place to raise a family because of livable communities and excellent public education;
- The best place to immigrate because of economic and community opportunities;
- The best place to vacation and conference due to our hospitality and tourism industries;
- The best place to farm because of our commitment to competitive agriculture worldwide; and
- The best place to live because of our ethical, responsive, public, non-profit and private sector leaders and involved citizens of all ages.

Last week Minnesota was named the “Most Livable State” for the fifth year in a row by Morgan Quitno Press, a research company in Kansas.

This award is based on 43 factors. But one of the most interesting and timely factors they considered is the price of electricity.

As you may know, last month we initiated an advertising campaign in California. The campaign slogan was:

Minnesota: Occasional whiteouts—but never blackouts.

In Minnesota, we not only have lots of electricity—but we supply it at a reasonable cost.

Last month the Washington D.C. based Progressive Policy Institute released a study called the Metropolitan New Economy Index that ranked the Twin Cities Metropolitan region 10th in the country in adapting to the technology-driven economy.

Our high ranking was due to the high quality education of our work force (ranked fourth in the nation), and the high degree of high-tech jobs (ninth in the nation).

It is a good place to live—but we’re also a great place to do business:

Minnesota's workers are among the most educated and productive in the country.

In 1997, 75% of our citizens participated in the labor force, quite a bit higher than the national average of 68%.

The state is the home of 16 *Fortune* 500 companies.

The overall health of Minnesota's economy and its potential for future growth makes the state an excellent place for businesses to thrive.

During the 1990's, Minnesota's dynamic economy has a proven record of economic achievement. In fact, between 1990 and 1997 Minnesota's economy grew 27 percent, while the national economy grew just 20 percent.

Our quality of life is exceptional. We're the home of 10,000 lakes, which conveniently turn into 10,000 ice skating rinks in the winter.

Minnesota has 66 state parks and 57 state forests that enjoy 8.4 million visitors annually. We respect our farmland, and appreciate our open spaces.

Our 10,000 lakes are full of fish and Saturday I'm going out after them during the Governor's annual fishing opener.

The Census also showed that we are gaining population, most notably into our downtowns, which reverses a 40-year trend of population loss to the suburbs.

We are the home to major league sports and major league shopping.

Yes, we are the home of the Mall of America, with 44 million visitors per year, the Mall of America is the most visited destination in the United States, more than Disney World and the Grand Canyon combined.

All in all, Minnesota is a great place to live, to work, and do business, but we're not resting on our laurels.

This year, I proposed a major overhaul of Minnesota's taxing systems. In March, the Wall Street Journal said this about my tax reform plan:

"Fiscal policy experts around the country credit him for tackling one of the nation's most sweeping initiatives to revamp state taxes."

And, I might note, this "sweeping tax reform plan" has been on the table for about four months and it is very discouraging that the Minnesota Legislature is now having to work overtime to catch up with me.

Actually, I think they underestimate my resolve to get this done. While they spend their time playing legislative games with special interest groups and risking necessary government services the people of this state want meaningful tax reform and I intend to get it for them.



Thanks again for coming to the Twin Cities, the home of great culture, great nature, great lakes, great golf courses and 201 legislators who, if they don't get their work done, are going to have a miserable summer.

However, while I'm wrestling with the legislature in the next few days, you all should have some fun.

Go out and swing Big Bertha, but while you're doing it, remember that our golf courses are just one part of the numerous, promising growth opportunities here in Minnesota.

Again, thank you and enjoy your conference and your stay.