

Thank you.

It's wonderful to be in Toronto and a real inspiration to be able to speak to so many who offer so much potential business for Minnesota.

What a perfect spot for COMDEX Canada! I'm told that Toronto is home to so many information technology companies – it's known as "Silicon Valley North."

Since taking office in 1999, I've led trade missions halfway around the world to Japan - and south of the U.S. border to Mexico. We had wonderful and productive experiences in both countries.

But there is always something special about visiting our good neighbors and long-time friends in Canada.

- NO country is more important to us than Minnesota's number one trading partner. That's why I went to Saskatoon last fall. And that's why I'm back in Canada today. One visit just isn't enough.

Minnesota's partnership with Canada is strengthened by good friends like Consul General Susan Thompson, who I'm happy to say is with us on our mission. Thanks to Susan, I recently had the privilege of being the first governor in Minnesota history to visit the Canadian consulate in Minneapolis.

It was a great honor -- and after 30 years - long overdue.

Canada and Minnesota have nurtured the bonds of friendship and cooperation for well over a century -- and today, we're reaping the benefits of a strong and healthy relationship.

It's no wonder we do so much business together. We share common principles, common goals -- and a common border that thousands of visitors from both sides cross every day.

- About half a million Canadians come to Minnesota each year -- most of them from Ontario and Manitoba. That's partly why I'm here. I want to invite more of you to visit Minnesota more often. We offer all the cultural and natural amenities.

But more than people cross our borders. Two-way trade between Canada and Minnesota is now worth more than \$7.6 billion a year.

To say that Canada is Minnesota's largest trading partner -- really doesn't say enough. You need to know just how big it really is:

- Minnesota exported more than \$2.4 billion in manufactured goods to Canada last year. That's more than we sold to our next three trading partners *combined*.

- Minnesota makes more money from exports to Ontario *alone* than we do from trade with all of Japan!

But let's narrow it down a bit:

- Minnesota exports to Canada grew by 12 percent last year - largely from the sale of electronic equipment and computer components.
- And Minnesota high tech products accounted for \$1 billion of all our manufactured exports to Canada.

So I hope you get a good look at what we have to offer at the Minnesota Pavilion. I know you'll like what you see.

- Minnesota companies are *world competitors* in technology and innovation.

We have been a breeding ground for information technologies ever since a University of Minnesota graduate by the name of Seymour Cray developed the supercomputer more than 50 years ago.

Today, Minnesota has nearly 8,000 high tech industries employing 200 thousand people-making us the fourth largest concentration of software companies in the United States.

- World-class, home-grown pioneers like Control Data, Honeywell and Cargill have helped create a *tech-smart* environment that attracts the best and the brightest from around the world.
- Minnesota companies are leading suppliers of voice, video and data systems
- And Minnesota ingenuity is revolutionizing the entertainment, data storage and printing industries.

It's no wonder Canada is our largest customer for industrial machinery - including computer-related goods and Minnesota-made electronic and electrical equipment.

Minnesota is also home to a thriving medical technology industry.

- Places like the Mayo Clinic and the University of Minnesota -- together with companies like Medtronic and 3M -- have made Minnesota a world leader in medical devices, research and biotechnology.

Minnesota's innovative research institutions, educated labor force and high-tech environment all contribute to a quality of life that's hard to beat. Sometimes *impossible* to beat.

- Minnesota was recently named the "Most Livable State" in the United States - *for the fifth year in a row* - by an independent research company.

The researchers themselves couldn't believe it. They thought about changing their methodology to give other states a chance -- but they knew that wouldn't be right.

Minnesota won fair and square - based on more than 40 "quality of life" factors - such as health, income, housing, education and recreational facilities.

- Minnesota even scores high in the "Coolness Ranking" -- and that's not just because I'm Governor.

Carnegie Mellon University ranked the Twin Cities among the top ten places in the country for its concentration of creative people -- and for its cultural attractions for young technology workers. They seem to love all our lakes, bike trails, golf courses and live entertainment.

That got us thinking. About the OTHER Silicon Valley.

With our tech-smart environment -- and great quality of life -- why not invite some companies in California to the land of ample energy?

- You may have heard that California is having problems with power outages - or "black-outs". Well, the only problem we face in Minnesota are occasional "white-outs" from blinding snowstorms. It's just part of our charm.
- So we bought a billboard outside the San Jose airport that invites high tech companies to "Upgrade to Minnesota". Our slogan:
- White-outs: Occasional. Black-outs: NEVER.

We have a sense of humor in Minnesota.

But seriously - think about it:

Office space in San Jose: \$80 a square foot.

Office space in the Twin Cities: \$20 a square foot.

You do the math!

At least one company *did* -- and took us up on our offer. And there are other good prospects.

Minnesota *is* a great state. I'm proud of our entrepreneurial spirit, our skilled workforce and our diverse economy.

But as Governor, I know we can't sit back and rest on our laurels in a world that is changing and getting smaller by the *second*. In the words of Will Rogers:

"Even if you are on the right track-if you don't keep moving, you're going to get run over."

- We need to do everything we can to create *better* jobs and make our economy even stronger, because it's not enough to be the best in the country.
- We must strive to lead the world.
- And we must work hard to build relationships outside our borders.

That's why I went to Washington last year and testified in support of permanent normal trade relationships with China. I'm happy to say the *tri-partisan* effort was a success-just in time for my trade mission to China this fall.

Premier Harris is one step ahead of us. He went to China a few months ago and came home with several new agreements. We *both* see China as the number one marketing opportunity of the 21st century.

- Now I'm urging Congress to support a Free Trade Agreement of the Americas -- to give our manufacturers better access to markets right here in our hemisphere.

A major portion of my Big Plan for Minnesota is about knocking down barriers that cripple our ability to compete in the global marketplace.

Free trade eliminates barriers. So does technology. And I've worked hard to be the champion for cutting edge technologies that connect us with the world in new and better ways.

I started in my own office - by making citizen outreach a top priority in my administration. Just recently, we unveiled our new and improved web site.

It's called Virtual Ventura.

I don't see why government can't be FUN - at least when the legislature is not in session.

Especially if it helps citizens stay in touch and know what I'm up to. They can look at my schedule, read about our policies -- even invite me to events.

Now people are *always* telling me where to go.

But let's face it. The most dynamic web site in the world is useless without ACCESS. And Canada is an important partner in our efforts to connect people in the most remote areas to the rest of the world.

Thanks to its strategic alliance with Manitoba Telecom Services, Minnesota-based Onvoy has extended its telecommunications network into every major city in Canada.

The barriers came down -- and the connections were made -- a long time ago between Minnesota and Canada. Today -- our commitment to each other has only made us stronger - in trade, tourism and business.

And our bilateral investments continue to create high wage, high skill jobs on both sides of the border:

Toronto-based Celestica -- the world's largest manufacturer of electronics -- already employs 1,800 workers in Rochester, Minnesota. And when it buys IBM's electronic card assembly and test operations in Rochester, the company will hire another 700 people.

When The Thomson Corporation of Toronto bought West Publishing in St. Paul in 1996-it was able to tap into West Group technologies and a highly skilled workforce. The move strengthened Thomson's position as a world leader in e-information services - and helped Minnesota become a global center for information technology development.

Canadian investors own a \$3.4 billion stake in more than 100 Minnesota companies.

And Canadian subsidiaries of Minnesota giants like 3M, Medtronic and ADC Telecommunications are helping to strengthen Canada's razor-sharp edge in technology.

Earlier today, I stopped by the exhibit hall and had a chance to meet people in both Minnesota's and Canada's high-tech industries. I left with the overwhelming sense that opportunity is not only knocking-but *pounding* at our door.

The similarities between Minnesota and Canada put us on the track toward the same destination. And our differences create opportunities that will get us there together. Minnesota is moving - and I'm happy to be here exploring how we can move together with our number one partner - Canada.

Thank you.