

Good evening. I'm very pleased to be here with you.

I'm especially pleased that Northwest Airlines is here with us, and their new Minnesota stopover offer is exciting news. We look forward to hosting the Canadian travelers who take advantage of this special offer to visit our state.

Canada is a close neighbor to Minnesota, so naturally, Canadians are our top international visitors. Over a half a million of our Canadian neighbors visit Minnesota annually.

Your companies help make that happen, and I'd like to say thank you for bringing those visitors to the Land of 10,000 Lakes.

I'm also here to personally invite you to visit us more often in Minnesota. To bring your tours to Explore Minnesota. Our promotional theme is "Explore Minnesota: Take Home a Story."

We know that what you're offering your customers is an experience, a quality travel experience. And the best souvenirs are the memories of these trips, the stories you bring home to tell your family and friends.

And in Minnesota, we're always looking to keep our travel experience fresh and interesting. We've been a vacation destination for about 150 years, and our beautiful lakes and woods are still part of our allure.

But we've also been developing the resources that we know today's travelers, your customers, are looking for. And we know that you are always looking for new ideas to sell to your customers.

So, today you'll find that Minnesota has:

- Some of the best golf courses in North America
- Top notch arts, museums and heritage destinations for your cultural heritage trips
- Miles of designated scenic byways to take you to places like the headwaters of the Mississippi River
- A wide range of shopping opportunities
- And excellent resorts, hotels and restaurants to serve your customers.

With our wide array of scenery and the tremendous diversity of things to see and do, Minnesota makes an excellent destination for your customers. Well, OK, I'm biased. In fact, I'm so biased, I'm called "Jesse, the Tourism Governor" back home. But really, it's a natural and easy thing for me to do, to sell the idea of exploring Minnesota. And I think you'll find that Minnesota tours can be a natural fit for your customers.

Canadians enjoy their time on the links, right? I enjoy an afternoon out on the course myself, and there are great places to golf in Minnesota. In fact, we've got 450 courses, and many of these are recent developments laid out by some of the biggest names in golf course design.

You'd want to go for the scenery alone!

Our lakeside golf resorts make a great destination, not just for their golf, but also for their fishing and other recreation. And Minnesota will host the PGA in August next summer.

An important consideration in selecting a tour route is the scenery along the way, right? Minnesota now has 20 designated scenic byways, a total of over 2,000 miles.

With our shared Great Lakes heritage, the circle tour of Lake Superior is popular with Canadians and Minnesotans alike. The North Shore of Lake Superior is incredibly beautiful. The North Shore Drive is one of only 15 nationally designated All-American Roads. It's anchored at the south end by Duluth, where the new Great Lakes Aquarium is. Another route follows the Mississippi River, including its source at Itasca State Park. And Minneapolis is home to one of the few urban scenic byways in the country.

Cultural and heritage tourism is another area we're developing in Minnesota. We've got world-class theater and art museums, including the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and the Guthrie Theater, the largest regional theater in the country.

Several destinations tell the story of our diverse ethnic heritage. You can learn more about our Dakota and Ojibwe Indian heritage at museums, historic sites and powwows, or visit the Iron Range and hear about the immigrants from dozens of countries who mined the ore that helped build the country.

Minnesota is also developing its wildlife tourism. We've long been known for the quality of our outdoors experience, but we're looking for new ways to connect visitors to that experience. We now have three birding trails, driving routes to prime bird watching spots, and several birding festivals, for both avid and novice bird watchers. We also have the International Wolf Center at Ely and Eagle Watch at Wabasha.

A major stop on any visit to Minnesota is the Twin Cities, of course. It's internationally known as the home to Mall of America, shopping center for the world. It's also known for some great football and basketball games, and Canadians love to watch the Vikings and the Timberwolves play.

Our Minnesota Twins are playing great baseball this summer, and it's always fun to watch the St. Paul Saints play Winnipeg. Our new NHL hockey team, the Minnesota Wild, is already a hit at their new arena in St. Paul. It seems that there's always something new in St. Paul these days. Right now there are statues of Charlie Brown drawing crowds, just like the Snoopys did last year.

Governor Jesse Ventura
Toronto Tourism Reception
National Club
Toronto, Ontario
July 11, 2001



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MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

So, you can see, there's a wide variety of experiences in Minnesota you can be part of. Through the Minnesota Office of Tourism, we can offer you the resources and connections you need to plan successful tours to explore our state.

And getting here is easier than ever, with the increased air service and special stopover offer provided by our hometown Northwest Airlines.

I wish you well in your meetings with representatives of the Minnesota tourism industry this evening. I'm sure you will find even more ways to work together to bring your customers to Minnesota.

We appreciate your business, and we're here to find more ways to build our travel business partnerships.

I'm enjoying my opportunity to visit with you here in Canada, and I hope the next time I see you, you're out and about, exploring Minnesota.

Thanks so much for being with us this evening. Please enjoy yourselves.