

Good afternoon.

It's always a pleasure to play the role of Jesse the Tourism Governor and sell the State of Minnesota to potential visitors.

Since I was elected governor I have placed an emphasis on diversifying Minnesota's economy.

Don't worry we still have cows. Our farmers still raise corn, soybeans and sugar beets and I still raise hell with the legislature.

But as you know we can't put all our economic eggs in one basket and so I think it is important for us to promote our state as a tremendous destination for conventions and vacations.

While our agri-business economy is still strong our travel and tourism industry is almost threatening to take over as the number one economic activity.

The reason of course is that we not only have a lot to offer businesses but we have a lot to offer convention visitors and tourists.

Since humans first figured out that they could give the guy in next cave something he wanted, and get something desirable in exchange, the world has been a marketplace.

Fast forward to the 21st century. Now the most important thing we exchange is ideas, information, points of view.

While technology has connected us in ways the generation before us never dreamed of, high tech communications will never replace in-person communications.

People still need to gather together to exchange ideas, keep current with their field, and meet the people they do business with.

Just last month I was at the International Tourism Exchange in Berlin, Germany. This exchange is known throughout the world as the largest trade fair for the global tourism industry.

Talk about getting people together to exchange ideas and information--I'm sure that many of you know just how huge this event is.

On a smaller scale, all the teleconference technology in the world will not keep American businesses from gathering their employees from across the country for corporate conferences. Professionals from every field get together to share ideas. And there is no doubt in my mind that one of the best places in this country to get these people together is in Minnesota.

If nothing else they can walk the streets of our cities and try to figure out just who the heck these people are that elected Jesse Ventura Governor.



This summer, for instance, the National Square Dance Convention will be held in the Twin Cities. Twelve thousand people do-si-doing through the streets of St. Paul...can you imagine?

But seriously, you know without me telling you, that it's important for people to gather to do business...and to have fun.

While September 11th had a devastating effect on travel and tourism it is now time for us to move on and get people, associations and business on the move. The freedom to move about in pursuit of happiness and success is fundamental to our democracy and as the Brits often say, 'we can't let the bastards win'.

So bring your conventions to Minnesota where we guarantee you will find happiness and success.

We have the facilities and a location that make it easy to gather people together. And we have plenty of enticements to keep you for a few days of fun after the business meetings are over.

It's easy to get to Minnesota.

The Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport is a major hub of the upper Midwest, with convenient flights from across the country and direct flights from Asia and Europe.

We all hate hassles at the airport, so it's interesting to note that our airport ranked first among U.S. airports in customer satisfaction in a survey of 90,000 travelers last year.

Just a couple of minutes from the airport is the Mall of America. The Mall celebrates its 10th birthday next summer. It's still the largest shopping and entertainment complex in the country, and it still draws visitors from around the world.

Both downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul are just ten minutes from the airport. And both offer convention centers and hotel accommodations to host any size meetings and conventions.

Greg Ortale has told you the details about the exciting expansion at the Minneapolis Convention Center. But I do want to put a plug in for all the other great things going on in downtown Minneapolis.

It's home to Vikings football, Timberwolves and Lynx basketball, and Twins baseball. It's got a very exciting collection of theaters, and numerous top-rated restaurants. From the Convention Center, you can stroll down Nicollet Mall and enjoy the shops and sidewalk restaurants.

Just across town in downtown St. Paul is the Touchstone Energy Place in the RiverCentre Complex. It's got a great location, perched above the Mississippi River and is located in a complex that is also home to the Minnesota Wild hockey team.

Downtown St. Paul is home to the Science Museum of Minnesota, an exciting new building overlooking the Mississippi. Concerts, opera and Broadway touring shows are regularly scheduled at the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts.

People have grown reluctant to spend time away from their families, and a Minnesota conference can be the start to a relaxing family getaway.

One of my personal favorites in Minnesota is its great fishing. As Governor, one of my official duties is to spend a day fishing at the Governor's Fishing Opener each May, to kick off our fishing season. It's a tough job, but I'm up to it. Visitors can find good fishing right in the Twin Cities area, or they can take a few days to explore other great fishing spots.

Another of my favorites is golf. I can tell you from personal links experience that Minnesota has some of the nation's top courses, cut out of the birch and pine forests. There are also great golf resorts not too far from the Twin Cities, and terrific championship-level courses right in the metropolitan area itself. In fact, the Twin Cities area will host the PGA Championship at Hazeltine National Golf Club this August and the Solheim Cup at Interlachen Country Club in September.

The Brainerd Lakes area has a reputation for its great golf resorts, and some of them also have meeting facilities and cater to smaller groups.

Lakeside resorts are a Minnesota classic, and a resort stay is a longstanding tradition in many families. It's a perfect add-on to a convention visit to our state.

And then there's our biggest lake, Superior, the greatest of the Great Lakes. The drive along its North Shore has been designated as an All-American Road for its spectacular scenery, one of only 15 in the country. The city of Duluth is the gateway to the lakeshore. This thriving town has become a popular tourism destination and, by the way, has a good convention center of its own overlooking Superior.

Just an hour south of the Twin Cities is Rochester, known for the quality medical care and research provided by the Mayo Clinic. Rochester's convention center has facilities for smaller national and regional groups.

In southern Minnesota, near Rochester, you'll find rolling bluffs bordering the Mississippi River. On our northern border are the pristine lakes of Voyageurs National Park. In between, you'll find everything you need for a perfect vacation.

And finally, if you are up early in the morning a week from today, tune in Good Morning America.

Governor Jesse Ventura  
Greater Minneapolis Convention & Visitors Association  
The Mayflower Hotel, Washington D.C.  
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MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Charlie Gibson and Diane Sawyer will be doing the show from a historic Minnesota river town called Stillwater and will also feature some of Minnesota's greatest attractions, including me.

Thank you.

Now I would be happy to respond to some of your questions about Minnesota or anything else for that matter