

Thank you, Mary.

I am honored to be here today among folks who truly understand the importance of thinking beyond our state and national borders.

I recently told Larry King that the China mission was my proudest accomplishment. And it was. When I became governor, I challenged my administration to position Minnesota as a World Competitor – and to think BIG.

And we did. We met the challenge with the China trade mission.

- It wasn't just the biggest, most ambitious trade mission to China ever undertaken by any state – although that's no small feat when you consider that Minnesota is not one of the larger states.
- But the mission helped Minnesota companies explore the Chinese market and make important contacts that they never could have made on their own.

What I'd like to do now is go through a few snapshots from our mission and give you my personal impressions

(PHOTOS FROM GREAT WALL)

We started our weeklong visit with a steep climb up the Great Wall.

Despite the rain, the view was spectacular – even though the climb was a little treacherous!

Will Lindsey, founder of the International Friends of the Great Wall, gave me a personal tour around JEW-YOONG pass.

Of course we couldn't go without reporters – 9 from Minnesota and several others from the TV networks and Chinese media outlets.

- Someone asked me if the rain put a damper on our first day in China. But the Chinese told me that, with the rain comes the dragon – and the dragon brings good luck.

And we had good luck all week!

(PHOTOS OF BEIJING STREET FESTIVAL)

We started the week off with a real bang. About 75 Chinese agriculture experts joined us at a networking lunch that looked and sounded just like a Beijing Street Festival.

- It was a genuine feast for the senses – drums, swords, acrobatics, dancing – and some great food.
- Some of the best food I've had was in China. It's not like any Chinese food in the states – especially the sparrows on a stick and fried scorpions. I confess I passed on those – but everything else was wonderful.

(PHOTOS OF “OLD” AND “NEW” CHINA)

Immediately on our arrival in China – it was clear that China is a country in transition – RAPID transition.

- We saw plenty of ancient pagodas and rickshaws – and we spent some time at Tianenman Square.
- But we also saw busy boulevards packed with cars and people in contemporary clothes.
- From modern highways to magnificent new office buildings, China is quickly moving into the 21st century. The charm and mystique of “Old China” still exists – but you can't help but be impressed by the explosive development in Beijing and Shanghai.

They say that China's national bird is the crane – the BUILDING crane.

It won't be long before the world considers Shanghai in the same light it views New York, London, Paris and Hong Kong.

(BANQUET AT GREAT HALL OF THE PEOPLE)

One of our most memorable nights was spent at Tianenman Square.

Our hosts on the mission – the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade – held a banquet in our honor at the Great Hall of the People.

- CCPIT has only three offices in the United States – and one of them is in the Minnesota Trade Office.

(PHOTOS FROM MEETINGS AND NETWORKING EVENTS)

We had the privilege of meeting with several senior government leaders in China – including the vice minister of foreign affairs and Chinese Vice Premier Li Lang-ching.

We couldn't take pictures at that meeting, so we settled for one of all of us outside the building.

- Vice Premier Li knew all about Minnesota – including our lakes -- and thanked me for my support of China's entry into the WTO and permanent normalized trade relations.
 - He also said China could use our expertise in cleaning up China's own polluted lakes. I told him we'd be happy to help.
- Some of our meetings were completely unexpected – like this one (Al Gore)
- I also met American business leaders at Chamber of Commerce lunches in Beijing and Shanghai...and engaged in a bit of commerce myself after seeing some spectacular Chinese artwork at the Beijing Street Festival.

But China and Minnesota really came together at our networking receptions in both cities. Our staff couldn't keep up with all the introductions.

(PLANT TOURS, FAEGRE/BENSON)

Many Minnesota companies have operations in China – and I was able to visit some of them while I was there.

3M was the first wholly owned foreign enterprise in China outside special economic zones and currently employs more than 900 people in seven cities.

- While in China, I announced that 3M was chosen to provide the most sophisticated digital license plate technology anywhere in the country. And I was presented with my own license plate during a visit to 3M, where I planted a tree and toured the plant in Shanghai.

I took part in ribbon cuttings at the new law offices of Faegre and Benson – and Dorsey and Whitney – and also got to tour Hormel's state-of-the-art processing plant outside of Beijing. The plant manufactures 450 products here.

- We wanted to see if Minnesota products turned up on grocery store shelves – and found plenty of them during our tour of a western-style grocery store in Beijing.

I can now confirm – Bugles are VERY popular in China!

(CHINA PHOTOS)

When our week was over, we left China with unforgettable images of an amazing country and warm, wonderful people. And we returned home with high hopes for Minnesota's future in China.

It took more than a year and a half to plan and execute this trade mission. But the real work began as soon as our business delegations came back to Minnesota and began plotting their futures in China.

From what I hear, they're working hard to seize every export opportunity that a market of 1.3 billion people can offer. I'm pleased and proud to hear it.

I'm also proud of the role the state played in helping Minnesota businesses to more fully explore their market opportunities in China. This mission was an outstanding example of how state resources can – and should – enhance business development.

I encourage other companies to look closely at potential market opportunities in China. We will support you in every way we can. Why?

Because Minnesotans always look ahead. And when we look to our future, we can't help but see China.

Thank you.