

Good evening.

It is quite in honor to be here.

Thanks especially to Governor and Mrs. Foster and all of the hardworking people who helped put this event together.

You should be proud of this outstanding celebration.

In Minnesota we're particularly thankful for the Louisiana Purchase, because we would indeed be in trouble if we all had to be speaking French right now.

We have a lot of French names for our cities, like Duluth and La Crescent.

We even have French on our state seal because our state motto is "L'Etoile du Nord," which means Star of the North.

Now that you've heard my pronunciation, you get a pretty good idea of how we Minnesotans talk.

Our main street in our biggest city, Minneapolis, is called the Nicollet Mall. We say Nik-let.

The French would say Nick-o-lay.

If you said "I'll meet you at the Nick-o-lay Mall," to someone in Minnesota, they'd think you were from some foreign place—like Wisconsin.

We're perfectly happy with our Minnesota French—we do things the way we want, not the way someone expects us to do them.

Come to think of it, that's kind of the way I govern, so I guess it's no surprise that the people of Minnesota elected me.

So thank goodness for the Louisiana Purchase. It means we can call our northern Minnesota city Grand Portage instead of Grahnd Por-*tahj*.

Thank you.