

Foreword:
Greater Minnesota Can Make
Minnesota Even Greater
Gov. Tim Pawlenty

Minnesota's continued success depends on the whole state — not just parts of it — doing well. Success doesn't happen overnight or by accident. It's the result of good ideas, hard work and strong values. Greater Minnesota has all of those qualities and more.

Our enviable quality of life depends on citizens having access to good jobs and economic opportunities wherever they live. Unfortunately, some Minnesota policy makers appear "pro job," but their approach is anti-business. That's like being pro-egg and anti-chicken. It just doesn't work in today's hyper-competitive global economy.

The best way government can help Minnesota compete is to remove burdens and avoid adding barriers to business. This means being job-friendly, holding the line on spending and reducing taxes.

We've made good progress on that front, and because part of our state faced extraordinary circumstances, we took extra measures to encourage investment and job growth in the most challenged parts of Minnesota.

JOBZ was created to provide local and state tax exemptions to qualified companies that expand or relocate into targeted regions outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area. It's not a silver bullet, but it's one tool being used to target help to Greater Minnesota. The program has worked, so far saving or creating more than 11,000 jobs and helping keep 300 businesses moving in the right direction.

Minnesota's next leaders would be wise to renew and expand JOBZ and also offer tax credits for small business start-ups, expansions or research and development activities.

They should also expand the "Angel Investment Tax Credit" we created that helps early stage companies raise capital and can especially help in Greater Minnesota. Likewise, they should continue efforts to reduce taxes and cost burdens on businesses more broadly.

But reducing government costs and taxes on job creators alone is not enough. Our workforce must be as educated, skilled, innovative and productive as possible to attract business development to our state, and matched with a modern, efficient and safe infrastructure to support prosperity.

We've advanced the ball on these measures over the last eight years, but we need to push harder.

Recently, many Minnesota teachers began being paid for performance, but more schools need to be held accountable for better results, not just given more money without showing reform or improvement. This includes higher education, where Minnesota's State Colleges and Universities are providing great opportunities through expanded online learning — ideal for advancing workers and job creators.

Schools and government programs need to utilize technology, shared services, and cost structures that are more closely in line with the private sector, rather than the outdated approaches too often used in government today.

Greater Minnesota's existing strengths also present strategic opportunities. With world demand for food projected to double over the next 40 years, Minnesota can benefit by aggressively encouraging and promoting value-added agriculture ventures, including livestock production, renewable energy, food processing and related activities. With help from research at the University of Minnesota focusing on innovations in these areas, we can lead the world.

Minnesota must also safely but quickly embrace the next generation of mining projects in northeastern Minnesota. Large-scale projects are now lined up and will bring thousands of new jobs for decades to come as the demand for metals in America and around the world continues to accelerate.

In addition, Greater Minnesota can greatly benefit from continuing efforts to export as many products as possible. There is increasing demand for our home-grown products, and Minnesota companies are tapping into rapidly expanding markets around the world. Since 2003, Minnesota-manufactured exports have increased 39% to \$14.6 billion in 2009.

Although there is much more to be done, I am optimistic about Greater Minnesota's future. Good ideas, hard work and strong values have always been the ingredients of success, and Greater Minnesota is proving that to be true.