



Let me officially welcome French Consul General Decherf to Minnesota.

Minnesota and France have a relationship that goes back to when we were the Minnesota territory—when the only budget problems we dealt with had to do with how many furs were available to trade.

But the traders and voyageurs left their mark all over the area: just walk a few blocks from here to the Nicollet Mall (we decided to go with the Minnesota pronunciation of Nick-o-lay), or you can turn on Marquette Avenue and head for the Radisson.

Nicollet, Marquette, Radisson, Hennepin--all evidence of the French influence.

And the state is still doing plenty of business with France, as are more than 500 Minnesota companies. In fact France is our 9th largest export destination.

Still, we're always looking for ways to expand our relationship, and I'm looking forward to working with Consul General Decherf to find more ways to do that.

Thank you.