

DEED Developments

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m EMPLOYMENT AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Build What Matters Tour Kicks-Off at the Capitol, Commissioners Tour Northeastern Minnesota

The Build What Matters tour kicked-off at the State Capitol this morning, where Minnesota Commissioners started their journey north to Cloquet. The commissioners will spend time in eight communities in northeastern Minnesota, visiting companies, schools and public works projects to learn about success stories and gain insight from across the region.

The focus of the Build What Matters tour is to connect with communities and community leaders, to listen and learn about the issues Minnesota communities are facing so DEED and other state agencies can work in partnership with communities to provide solutions for all Minnesotans.

Everyone on the tour, as well as other leaders in the Walz-Flanagan Administration, interacts with business in one way or another. And every agency supports shared goals: to see Minnesota's private sector flourish, to make sure every Minnesotan has a fair shot at a good-paying job, and to make our state the very best in the country to locate, start and grow a successful business. Those goals are better achieved when everyone works together. DEED succeeds when we hear directly from communities, businesses and Minnesotans from around the state.



A few ways the state agencies work together to reach out, connect with businesses, and help them take off is through the Minnesota Business First Stop (MBFS) and the Minnesota Business Vitality Council (MBVC). The MBFS is a partnership of nine state agencies that helps straighten out the development process so complex business projects can cut through red tape and move forward quickly and efficiently. MBVC is the Walz-Flanagan Administration's interagency group that works to uncover ways to tackle complex economic development issues and capitalize on the ample opportunities to grow Minnesota's economy.

So whether Minnesotans are looking to make a big splash—by launching a new business—or navigate the nitty gritty—such as adjusting to new tax codes—DEED is always available to serve and support them. We're excited to hear from business leaders and communities on this Build What Matters tour because *people* are at the heart of what makes Minnesota great. Let's keep building together.

State Commissioners Visit Eight Minnesota Communities During 'Build What Matters' Tour

A group of state commissioners from Governor Tim Walz's Cabinet headed north this week as part of the Department of Employment and Economic Development's (DEED) Build What Matters tour, eager to connect with communities and community leaders in northeastern Minnesota about issues they may be facing. The Build What Matters tour's focus is to showcase what makes Minnesota one of the most welcoming and competitive states in the country for attracting and growing businesses – and learn what can be done to make it even better.



Day One:

Sappi: The first stop on the tour was Sappi, a paper mill located in Cloquet. Sappi is a global diversified wood fiber company, and the third largest exporter in Minnesota as well as one of the greenest mills in the country. While touring the facility, Department of Agriculture Commissioner Thom Peterson spoke about the [Bioincentive Program](#) established by the

Minnesota State Legislature in 2015 to encourage commercial-scale production of advanced biofuels, renewable chemicals and biomass thermal energy through production incentives.

Cloquet Leadership Luncheon: The second stop was at the Community Memorial Hospital, where the commissioners met with civic leaders from Cloquet, Carlton County, and the Fond du Lac Tribal Council. The group discussed community concerns about factors stanching economic growth, such as housing, broadband, and childcare. DEED Commissioner Steve Grove spoke with the group about expanding educational opportunities and supports for families and parents, and how agencies have worked together to propose policies to better support Minnesotans.

Komatsu Mining: Next, the group made a stop at Komatsu Mining, a global construction and mining manufacturing business located in the city of Virginia. Komatsu recently opened a facility in 2012, with nearly 70 employees. Department of Transportation Commissioner Nancy Daubenberger spoke about the recent collaboration between the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board and the City of Virginia to add a left turn lane into Komatsu Mining at the intersection of Highway 53 and P&H Road this summer. Prior to this addition, Komatsu vehicles couldn't sit in the median without encroaching into traffic.



Tribal Dinner: To cap off the first day, the group met with Tribal Partners at the Fortune Bay Resort in the city of Tower to discuss [Minnesota's Climate Action Framework](#), as well as [the Roadmap for Equitable Economic Expansion Report](#). Tribal leaders and commissioners discussed the value of collaboration and consultation on important issues like workforce development and agreed to continue working

together to ensure equitable support for all people in Minnesota.

Day Two:

Heliene: The second day of the tour kicked-off in Mountain Iron at Heliene, a solar panel production company. Heliene is Minnesota's only solar panel factory, and the solar panel

market is projected to hit \$22.9 billion in 2025. The commissioners were joined by Gov. Tim Walz, and they discussed clean energy as an important growth industry in Minnesota. Department of Commerce Commissioner Grace Arnold and DEED Commissioner Grove spoke about the green jobs industry, and they concluded that, as it expands, it's critical for state commissioners, policymakers and leaders do everything possible to understand this sector's growth potential and support Minnesota companies like Heliene.

U.S. Steel: The tour's stop at U.S. Steel brought celebration of direct reduced iron (DRI), a new product never before produced in Minnesota. DRI is a purer form of iron that can be used directly in electric arc furnaces – which currently use about 60 percent of the steel produced in the United States. Gov. Walz spoke of the value of working together to build a durable economy, and Minnesota's success in preparing our economy for the future.

Detroit Diesel Remanufacturing (DMR): The third stop of the day was DMR, a Hibbing company moving into and investing in electric vehicle remanufacturing for trucks following 15 years of producing new and remanufactured electronics components for heavy-duty equipment, trucks, passenger vehicles, agriculture, transit and rail industries. Iron Range Resources & Rehabilitation Board Commissioner Mark Phillips led the group's discussion about DMR's new expansion on the horizon in 2024, and their hope that their strong hiring practices—flexible hours, onsite training—will bring in more workers.

Cirrus Aircraft: The final stop of day two was Cirrus Aircraft in Duluth, where the commissioners got a behind-the-scenes tour of the manufacturing floor. Commissioner Grove said that Cirrus, already the largest manufacturing employer in Duluth, recently announced a large expansion in Duluth that is expected to bring dozens of new engineering jobs and fill a building that has been vacant since early in the COVID-19 pandemic. The expansion will be very positive – not only for Cirrus and its employees, but for the Duluth community as a whole.

State Commissioners Conclude ‘Build What Matters’ Tour in Duluth

The ‘Build What Matters’ tour wrapped up in Duluth after three days in Northeastern Minnesota. State Commissioners connected with communities and showcased what makes Minnesota one of the most welcoming and competitive states in the country for attracting and growing businesses.



The tour’s final day began with Launch Minnesota, [a statewide collaborative effort](#) to accelerate the growth of startups and amplify Minnesota as a national leader in innovation. The commissioners met with startups and economic development officials in Duluth and Northland about support for new and emerging businesses. Duluth Mayor Emily Larson and Launch MN Executive Director Neela Mollgaard led the discussion on Launch Minnesota’s growing statewide network, and the strengths and areas of growth for startups in Northeast Minnesota.

The second stop of the day was a bus tour of the Port of Duluth, led by Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Commissioner Katrina Kessler. Commissioner Kessler, along with PAC and Department of Natural Resources experts, spoke about the importance of the Port and the St. Louis River for the shipping economy and the environment, and the restorations being done. Department of Transportation Commissioner Nancy Daubenberger discussed infrastructure improvements, including the need to replace the Blatnik Bridge, which is aging, but critical to both Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Minnesota Power, a division of Allete, inc., hosted the Capstone Forum, the final event of the tour. The commissioners shared reflections from the tour and hosted small-group conversations with business and civic leaders from the region, following a welcome from Mayor Larson and APEX President Rachel Johnson. The group heard from Allete CEO Beth Owens, who discussed Allete’s leadership in the clean energy transition, as well as Commissioner Grove, who spoke about the [Roadmap for Equitable Economic Expansion](#) and the administration’s work to build an economy that works for everyone. Commissioner Grove also touched on the

[‘Build What Matters’ initiative](#) to expand Minnesota’s prosperity and encourage business growth in our state.



This year’s Build What Matters Commissioners tour was an important opportunity to meet with businesses and communities in Northeastern Minnesota. Commissioners were thrilled to hit the road, see some of what makes Minnesota great, and to find out what more state agencies can do to help it thrive.

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