



## TOURISM & TECHNOLOGY



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Brainerd Dispatch/Steve Kohls

# Tourism & Technology

## Pawlenty lauds combination at conference at Cragun's

**BY MIKE O'ROURKE**

Associate Editor  
EAST GULL LAKE —

Gov. Tim Pawlenty praised the tourism industry's willingness to embrace technology Thursday as he addressed the Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference at Cragun's Conference and Golf Resort.

The three-day conference featured presentations on using Web sites and consumer-generated content to attract tourists to specific destinations.

Pawlenty described how younger generations rely heavily on new technology to learn more about a variety of subjects. Young people, he said, spend about half of their waking hours interacting with televisions, iPods, cell phones and MySpace.

He cited a favorite quote that exemplified how change is necessary in order for any enterprise to flourish: "The things that got us here

will not get us there." Massive changes in demographics, culture and technology call for new approaches, he said.

"This generation gets information learns in fundamentally different ways than we did," Pawlenty told the audience. "They learn and gather information like we didn't."

The governor noted the importance of energy, faith, optimism and marketing in the success of any venture. He also said politicians have to back up good intentions they articulate for the tourism industry.

"Deeds and money have to back up excitement and enthusiasm," he said.

His budget for tourism, he said, calls for a 20 to 40 percent increase compared to the last budget, an amount he described as a significant step up. The variance in numbers, Pawlenty said, is because the amount of the increase depends upon how

it's calculated.

"We'll push that really hard in the Legislature," he said.

The importance of partnering with other businesses and with civic events, such as the state's upcoming sesquicentennial, was emphasized by Pawlenty. He also urged resort and hospitality business people to communicate with their lawmakers and "gently" hold them accountable.

"You should be good about telling us what should be done," Pawlenty said.

Pawlenty's speech came at the conclusion of a three-day conference at the resort that attracted more than 300 people.

The state's chief executive was introduced by Dutch Cragun, owner of the host resort. Cragun praised Pawlenty for initiating the first governor's deer hunting opener and creating the Explore Minnesota Tourism Council.

"Gov. Tim is the first governor to

appoint a permanent committee to advise him," Cragun said.

Pawlenty opened his remarks by attributing the success of Cragun's to the work ethic of both Dutch and his wife, Irma. The governor recalled checking into the resort at about 2 a.m. as a first-time gubernatorial candidate the clerk to relay a message to Dutch. He was told that the resort owner was working in his office if he wanted to talk to him personally.

"He's great," Pawlenty said of Dutch, "but Irma's even better."

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## COMMENTARY

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