

US-Canada Summit Keynote- Governor Pritzker

Tuesday, June 11th, 2024

Good afternoon! It is my pleasure to be here to celebrate the storied relationship between our two countries. As a leader of the greatest state in the U.S., and as one more representative of the United States of America, let me thank you all for your continued dedication to this tremendously important bond. I want to, also express my gratitude to BMO and the Eurasia Group for hosting this vital summit.

Our strong and lasting alliance is a testament to our shared values – justice, equality, opportunity. For centuries now, the United States and Canada have been powerful forces on the world stage for these principles and have leveraged our combined strength to spread peace and democracy around the world.

And the relationship between Canada and Illinois extends back even further. Towns across Illinois – Cahokia, Bourbonnais, St. Anne, Manteno – owe their heritage to those early Canadian migrants.

Now, over 200 years later, those bonds have strengthened mightily as Illinois and Canada have both developed around a commitment to shared prosperity, sustainability, and equal opportunity. And that level of growth could not have happened without a mutual commitment to one another.

Canada is Illinois' largest trading partner, with overall bilateral trade reaching \$92 billion dollars in 2022. Illinois ranks first in imports and fourth in exports among US states, a testament to how interconnected our supply chains have become.

And this relationship is still prospering. In the past fifteen years, Illinois' exports to Canada have increased over 100% with a 30% increase coming in 2022 alone. Over that same fifteen-year period, imports increased 184%, a clear signal of the compatibility of our economies in the new age.

More than 370 Canadian companies are already operating in Illinois, employing over 32,000 Illinoisians in sectors from clean energy to finance to frozen food. Companies like BMO, McCain Foods, and Lion Electric have given us a strong foundation to build on. But I am here to talk about the next chapter of our relationship.

Since I became governor in 2019, Illinois has undergone a significant transformation – economically, culturally, and in governance. I inherited a state plagued by fiscal challenges that had held back our economy and our communities for too long. But I immediately undertook a comprehensive approach to not just rectifying the mistakes of our past but building for our future.

Today we have restored our fiscal health with 9 credit upgrades, balanced budgets and \$65 billion of investment in schools, roads, rail, broadband and more. We have pushed our economy in the right direction, fostering a business-friendly climate and making strategic investments in education and workforce development to provide a sustainable framework for long-term growth.

We are more inclusive and welcoming, fighting off the regressive social policies of a fringe minority, we are a state that proudly defends people's freedoms – women's rights, civil rights, voting rights, LGBTQ rights. You might say we've followed your lead here in Canada.

I was a businessman before becoming Governor, in both manufacturing and technology, and I understand well the myriad of factors that inform a decision to invest or expand in any given state. So, I set out to make Illinois an attractive business climate and to give companies from around the world an incentive to put down roots.

In just the last 5 years, we have grown the Illinois economy to over 1 trillion dollars – the fifth largest in the nation. If we were an independent country, we'd be part of the G-20.

We are the number one U.S. state in the Midwest for job creation and have been ranked by CNBC as the second-best state in the US for infrastructure as well as education. Illinois has the top 2 business schools in the U.S. and we produce more engineers at the University of Illinois each year than Harvard, MIT and Caltech combined.

On average last year, a new business moved to Illinois or expanded operations here every single day – more than 500 companies in total.

With the largest nuclear energy production in the U.S., we are a net energy exporter, and we have the 3rd most resilient electric grid among US states.

And that's just the beginning— we are at the precipice of something bigger. We have made it our specific mission to attract the jobs and industries of the future.

One of those that we are already a leader in is the quantum computing industry. Now I won't bore you with a layman's explanation of quantum superposition or qubits or quantum entanglement. But know that quantum has the potential to revolutionize entire industries and unlock a world of possibility in clean energy, artificial intelligence, medicine, finance, and much, much more.

We set out to make ourselves an undisputed capital for quantum computing. We did so not just through incentives or tax breaks – which we also provided—but by building up an entire quantum ecosystem of research and development, finance, and manufacturing. We've brought together quantum leaders like University of Chicago, University of Illinois, Northwestern, Argonne, Fermilab and others with IBM, Google and a startup ecosystem that's driving real success.

The state of Illinois has committed \$200 million to the sector, including the first quantum focused accelerator. And in our latest budget, we added \$500 million to support and build Quantum Computing Campus, a place where public and private sector entities can come together to collaborate and innovate.

We invested in our research institutions, fighting for every federal dollar to stimulate innovation. Billions in federal funding is flowing into Illinois. We are also investing in our people, utilizing our top tier universities to help build out the research and manufacturing workforce.

These are the types of sound investments that will power our future. Whether quantum, electric vehicles, agtech, clean energy, or life sciences, Illinois has positioned ourselves at the forefront of the next technological and economic revolution.

Our relationship to our Canadian neighbors and the thriving business and technological ecosystem is an integral part of that future.

To the many organizations and industries represented in this room, I want to reaffirm my commitment once again to growing together and solidifying the bonds that have kept us in cooperation for so many years. Our greatest challenges – from climate change to poverty to international conflict – will require us to work together and leverage our combined strength to promote lasting peace and prosperity. Illinois will be a willing partner to you, economically and diplomatically, as we face these challenges together.

I want to make one final plug to you all to take a visit to our great state, come and enjoy our natural beauty, our incredible food, and our warm people. If you like it, come start a family or build a business in Illinois and know that as long as I am governor, my state will be a place where all can thrive.

Thank you for having me here and for your continued work to build a better future for all of us.