

**Show Transcript  
Deconstructing Dinner  
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**Title: 2017 - The Health Care Crisis**

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*Brent Warner:* When most of you were a lot younger type 2 diabetes was called ... anybody know? Late-onset diabetes. It wasn't called type 2. It was only us older people that got this disease. You got it after the age of forty.

Now we have kids in this province at the age of eight, nine, ten with type 2 diabetes. If you looked at any epidemic – whether it's influenza or plague from the Middle Ages – they are not as serious as the epidemic of obesity in terms of health impact on our country.

*Jon Steinman:* And welcome to Deconstructing Dinner, a syndicated weekly one-hour radio program and podcast produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY in Nelson, British Columbia. I'm Jon Steinman and that was just Brent Warner speaking, our featured speaker on today's broadcast of Deconstructing Dinner. Brent has lent his voice to our program before, and I recorded him once again speaking just last week in Nanaimo. Brent is an Industry Specialist with the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Lands based in Victoria.

His recent presentation does an excellent job at summarizing some of the major food issues facing Canadians, but more importantly, how these issues affect our health. And the title of today's broadcast is "2017 – The Health Care Crisis." And just shortly we will learn more about why the year 2017 holds such importance, when it comes to our food.

**increase music and fade out**

*Jon Steinman:* For those of you who are eagerly awaiting some more recordings from the CropLife Canada conference held back in September, those broadcasts are still in the works and you can expect a second installment of those shows on our next broadcast. But adding to the list of future shows will also be recordings compiled just this past weekend, following my visit to Vancouver Island. I took a short trip to the Nanaimo area to learn more about two initiatives in particular that should inspire any community looking to protect health and protect farmers.

My first evening in Nanaimo consisted of an evening event hosted by Food Link Nanaimo, an organization working towards ensuring reliable access to healthy food for Nanaimo and area residents.

Speaking at the event was Brent Warner of British Columbia's Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, and we'll hear more from Brent in just a moment. Also speaking at the event was Frank Moreland of Edible Strategies. Frank has also appeared on Deconstructing Dinner on a number of occasions. And on this particular occasion in Nanaimo, Frank was publicly announcing for the first time the formation of a co-operative that will look to redefine how food ends up from the farm to the table, and it will also ensure that all along the way, the farmer will be ensured an adequate price for their product. The initiative is one of the first of its kind in Canada, and we'll be devoting quite a bit of time to exploring this in the coming weeks.

Also to explore in the coming weeks will be the event hosted the following day and organized by the Food Sustainability Committee at Nanaimo's Mid-Island Co-op. Billed as a Farmers' Showcase, the full-day event was designed to bring farmers and the community together and test the potential for the creation of a weekly farmers' market in the city, something that surprisingly enough does not yet exist in Nanaimo in its true form – that is a market with farmers selling food.

I can say from my experience there that the event – this test farmers' market - was more than just a success, it was probably one of the best farmers markets I've been to in Canada, and literally thousands of people showed up to literally clean out the farmers' and producers' products. There were even farmers running back to the farm to get more food. And I did interview at least a dozen of the vendors there with the hope of capturing this excitement and possibilities that this event holds for the community and for the farmers and producers in the region.

### **soundbite**

*Jon Steinman:* Coming back to the focus of today's broadcast, Brent Warner's October 19<sup>th</sup> presentation did an excellent job of capturing the focus of my weekend on the Island for a number of reasons. For one, Brent's role at the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands is involved with direct farm marketing - that is the creation and administration of models that directly link the customer with the farmer. Farmers' markets are of course one of these models. But his presentation also focused on health and how the health impacts of our food choices need to be the driving force in developing new food system models that will contribute to a healthier population. Now this focus ties in to the broadcast we will feature in the coming weeks, one that will explore the creation of this co-operative referred to just earlier, and one that literally will create a segment of the food system that will no doubt contribute to a healthier population.

Again, Brent Warner is an Industry Specialist with the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. Brent has been working in agriculture for over thirty years. He was instrumental in launching Vancouver Island's wine industry and, believe it or not, their kiwifruit industry. He is the past Secretary of the North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association and the author of *Marketing on the Edge*. In 1999 Brent helped launch the BC Association of Farmers' Markets.

In this first segment, Brent introduces why ensuring local farmers can continue to farm is so important to Canadians

*Brent Warner:* (applause) Thanks Jen. Okay folks, this is going to be a rather quick forty-five minutes. I am going to try and show you thirty years of my life in sixty slides. What we are going to look at are sort of the issues around food; the changes that are happening in food; and why it is a much more positive time to be in agriculture now than it was five years ago, or certainly twenty years ago.

I am a production-trained horticulturalist. I teach farmers how to grow crops, and some of my old time colleagues are out here in the audience from many, many years ago when I used to work right down in the dirt, teaching them how to grow raspberries and strawberries.

I started the Direct Marketing Association on Vancouver Island and the Fraser Valley and in the Okanagan back in the early eighties because I realized that I can grow crops, I can show you how to grow crops, and you can still all go bankrupt. So it wasn't just about growing crops: there's a lot more to this picture than that. And so I sort of moved away from that. I still do that. A lot of you farmers have my home phone number. I don't know if that's good or bad some nights. We've moved more to marketing the product because we have to get people back into agriculture.

So today is going to be rather fast. These are my ideas gleaned over a long career, a lot longer than some of you have probably walked this earth, unfortunately, but you guys have got to carry the next thirty years.

So, I am going to try to give you some ideas. You're welcome to ask questions going through or keep the questions for later. If there is something that really jumps out at you and you want to know about it right then, by all means just put up your hand or shout out at me and we'll see what we can do.

My job today is to talk about what does it takes to put food on the plate, and it's a pretty complicated question. I could just say to you, in one sentence, "If you would all just pay more for food. Thank you very much." It's over. That's the end of my speech. And that's basically what it boils down to. But there are a lot of other things that come into play, and you are going to see what's happened to our Ag system.

We have a massive change going on in agriculture in North America and it's been going on for a long time – since the Second World War - where we have less and less people on the farm. More and more of us are urbanizing. And this is a world, global trend: it doesn't matter if it's in China or the United States. As countries develop they urbanize. And we are certainly - you can look at the little blue men there - less and less blue men on the farm all the time.

Why is that? Well, it's because there is less and less return on the farm, and there is a good graph there of every province in the country – B.C. losing the least farmers up until 2001. And actually we have seen a little bit of blip since early 2000 where there are a lot of smaller farmers, younger people coming back on small acreages. So B.C. actually has seen a blip up as opposed to most of the big Ag areas of this country, say the prairies where they are growing grain crops. We are seeing a big consolidation, more and more big farms and everybody else... there's nothing in the middle - that's the problem. We have young people getting in, big corporate farms, and nothing left in between.

So, as I said, the farms are getting bigger. The grain farms – instead of one section, two section, three section – grain has been a real issue in this country. The bio-fuels thing looks like it's going to change that, but it's certainly not about food.

The dominant source of income for those people that are still left on the farm is not farm revenue. And so when people say they are on the farm, in most cases at least one of the partners is working off the farm, doing something that keeps the other one working in the hobby they love.

And you can imagine on this island where, on the Saanich Peninsula, farmland is worth somewhere in the area near a hundred thousand an acre, or more, depending on how small the piece and where it is. But that would be a minimum price that I would give you right now for a Class 1 land on the Saanich Peninsula is a hundred thousand an acre.

There is no crop that I could tell you to grow that that will return that to you, ever. So, farmland has priced itself out of farming.

*Jon Steinman:* For those of you wondering what Class 1 farmland means, that was exactly the question posed to Brent Warner at this point during his presentation. And, quickly, here's his response.

*Brent Warner:* Class 1 is for agriculture. So the best soil in this country is selling for about a hundred thousand an acre. And on the Saanich Peninsula that would be married to the best climate in this country, because very rich people like to sit a house in the middle of it and look around at the land. It's got nothing to do with farming. It's just that everybody in Canada and most of the West Coast United

States want to live here. So they are all moving here and that's pushed the price up.

The Agricultural Land Reserve that we do have in this province does not stop people from buying farmland and sitting on it. If you have money you can buy farmland. You can't develop it but there's nobody that stops you from buying it. And what we are seeing on the Saanich Peninsula and the Lower Mainland is very rich people buying this land, putting monster houses on it, and then just turning it into a garden, or a lot with a horse, or a big huge piece of green space, but it's not productive agriculture.

*Jon Steinman:* Now again, the topic of today's broadcast is the impact of food systems themselves on human health. Later on the broadcast Brent Warner will get into more detail of why the design of our food systems is so important in curtailing rising rates of obesity and diabetes. And as there is no arguing that local and fresh food is healthier food, the availability of farmland close to urban centres is of paramount importance to ensure population health. Rarely would we associate urban sprawl or the declining population and increasing average age of farmers as phenomena that impact human health.

*Brent Warner:* What's going on with the reason that our food is not ours that is on the table is we have this problem with urbanization. In the early 1900s the urban population was essentially one in three of us. And in those days about one in three of us was living on a farm. So most of you had parents on a farm or grandparents on a farm.

Nowadays, most kids that are in school probably don't even have a grandparent that was ever on a farm. So it's changed dramatically. We are now down to where we have a farm population of less than two per cent in this country. So if you envision that as a hundred people, probably two of them have some direct relation to agriculture; ninety-eight of them don't. And so therefore there's a problem: they don't understand it. Therefore, their food system to them is what? It's going to a grocery store and seeing groceries - that's their food system. When you in the movement, meeting like we are in tonight, where people actually understand that, that isn't what you think of as a food system.

But when people say there is enough food in Nanaimo or Duncan or Victoria they believe that if they go to the grocery stores and the shelves are full that that is a good food system. They forget about the fact that in 1996 when we had that big snow and everything collapsed and the trucks didn't run in three days we were essentially out of food on Vancouver Island. We had basically nothing left. Three days - that's about all we have here. We produce on this island less than ten per cent of what we eat.

*Jon Steinman:* So as farm income impacts the value of farming and therefore the viability of farming close to urban centres, what choices do we make as the

public that impact farm income? Well, the most obvious is where we choose to shop. Another impact is whether we choose to eat in or eat out. And Brent Warner of British Columbia's Ministry of Agriculture and Lands explains.

*Brent Warner:* Part of this misinformation and the fact these two people out of a hundred are all that's left. The other ninety-eight - where do they get their information about their food system?

Well, if you look at the U.S. numbers, which are identical to ours in most cases (I work almost seamlessly across the border. There are some differences but there are more similarities than differences.), the U.S. government spent forty-eight million to promote nutrition and health for kids. The food industry spent 2.7 billion with a "B" and McDonalds alone spent 1.3 billion with a "B" on advertising.

So where are your children getting their information about food? They're getting it from television and from going to McDonalds. So their idea of a food system is that. It's not about we used to think of as food.

Things changed very rapidly after the Second World War. Those of you that are younger probably don't realize this but we didn't even have refrigerated trucks until the 1940s. So obviously food didn't travel long distances in those days unless it was on ice - big blocks of ice. We use to ship strawberries from the Saanich Peninsula to Alberta in trains with ice. But in the forties we invented the refrigerated truck and that changed everything. Refrigerators, refrigerated containers and now we can move stuff all over the world. So it hasn't been very long. When you think about it this isn't a hundred years: it's about seventy, eighty years since we've been mass-moving food all over the place.

If you look at which food moves a lot, the farthest obviously is stuff that stores and isn't too heavy. So broccoli is a great one; it moves all over the world. Asparagus moves all over the world. You don't move pumpkins a long way because they weigh too much. You don't move potatoes a long way. You move them from Iowa - Idaho, sorry - to here but you don't move them from China to here. They weigh too much.

But what do we move from China to here, which has taken over totally and every place you buy except at a local farm or organic store? What one commodity does China dominate right now? Garlic, bingo. Every piece of garlic you buy in Safeway, Save-On, Thriftys is from China, unless it specifically says it isn't. If it doesn't say it's from anywhere it's from China. Those packages - they're all from China. So if you are buying garlic and it doesn't say it comes from somebody's farm in Nanaimo it's from China. Why? Because it's light, it stores, it can be shipped without refrigeration, it's easy to move.

So where does our food come from? Who's the number one food retailer in the world? Walmart. Getting bigger everyday. They will soon control the North

American food system. They basically do now but it will be much more in your face within a few years. Costco is right behind them. Farmers' markets don't show up on this list.

So the top ten, top fifteen U.S. retailers - Walmart is way up at the top. And you know when Walmart moves into something they don't talk about buying from the farmer down the road: they are buying for their entire store chain.

Where do we spend our food dollars? Where do we spend our money (sorry)? Right now food dollars - we spend about half at home and half in the restaurant section. So most of us are eating out at least fifty per cent of our life, and our kids will be eating out more than that. So if you are looking at how do we get people to eat food, you'd better be thinking about that end of the fact that more and more of us are eating out all the time and we don't cook at home.

How much our income do we spend on that food? North America spends the least amount per capita of anywhere in the world. And we currently, depending on whose statistics you are looking at, spend somewhere between seven and eleven per cent of our disposable income on our food. And then you take half of that, which is used at restaurants.

So we are spending very little money on food, and we've had this huge government pressure since the Second World War to actually lower that. Less money, less disposable income on food. And why is that? Because we want to spend it on other things, like the portable entertainment devices you have, your cell phone. All of us are spending more and more money there. And in order to keep the standard of living that we are accustomed to we spend less and less on our food, because we never realized a lot of things about our food system, and we'll get to that in a minute.

So there you go - our food, we have continually depressed in it. And we are at about fifty-fifty right now, in the home and out of the home. So fast food, fancy restaurants, whatever, you're spending more and more of your money away from the house. And that's tied in to where you work, and how long you can take to cook and all that stuff.

What has that done to farm income in North America? Well, between 1981 and 2002 in Canada the farmers' income increased about forty-two per cent. You think, "Wow, that's not bad. We've got a forty-two per cent increase in the farm income." Unfortunately, the input costs to the farm in that same period of time increased seventy-nine per cent, so actually the farm is operating on a deficit of thirty-seven per cent. So it cost the farmer thirty-seven per cent more to farm in 2002 than it did in 1981. So, there's a problem on the farm obviously.

We just mentioned that Walmart is moving into the organic market, and that's a disaster for the organic movement. The organic movement that many of us were

involved with back in the early eighties is not the organic movement of today. The organic movement today is a commodity. It's like talking about beef, or pork, or eggs - faceless products. Organic is faceless now. So, if you go to Walmart and you want to buy organic, you go to Safeway, Save-On, Thriftys and you want to buy organic, it could be from anywhere in the world.

Anybody see the *Time* magazine article that came out last fall with the big apple on the front of it? Anybody remember what it said? The title was "Local trumps organic." And what they were saying was the new consumer concern is that, if you as a consumer want to buy from a local farmer, don't be looking for organic first, because if you are buying organic first you'll be buying from offshore, because that is where organic is going to keep coming from, if that's your first choice. If you want to buy local and organic, fine, or organic and local, good, but if you strictly put organic out front, more and more you will be buying imported product.

And who's going to supply that? Walmart. Because Walmart is moving into organic and you can believe they are not going to buy any organic product in Nanaimo: they're going to buy it from Mexico, California, China, wherever.

*Jon Steinman:* And this is Deconstructing Dinner, and today's broadcast titled "2017 - The Health Care Crisis." We've been listening to Brent Warner, an Industry Specialist in Direct Farm Marketing with British Columbia's Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, and I recorded him speaking in Nanaimo on October 19<sup>th</sup>. Brent's presentation was part of a larger weekend focused on inspiring the community of Nanaimo to begin thinking more critically of where their food is coming from.

Over the next few weeks I will be sharing with you more recordings from this weekend trip to Vancouver Island. But, coming back to Brent's presentation, we continue on this topic of how the design of local food systems impacts human health. As the economic health of local farmers also ensures the health of the population, today's broadcast is laying out some of the key concerns for British Columbians leading up to the year 2017. And these issues aren't much different across the country.

A document that has begun to reshape the province's focus on agriculture and food is also one that has not received much media attention. According to reports, by 2017, because of the increasing needs of our healthcare system, the budget of the Province of British Columbia will only permit the funding of health care and education at a minimal rate - nothing else. This scenario is not much different across the country, as I said earlier. And it's this that presents the reason for the title of today's broadcast, "2017 - The Health Care Crisis," because it's this that many argue needs to push provinces to begin changing their approach to agriculture and food.



One of the most significant drivers of agriculture and food in recent years has been this rise in organic foods, a rise that has had negative impacts on small-scale and local farming. In this next segment, Brent speaks of this and the impacts the dominant food system has also had on the apple and orchard industry in British Columbia.

*Brent Warner:* There's a six thousand acre farm in California that grows organic carrots. In my view of organic, in the days that we started the organic movement you couldn't grow anything on six thousand acres and call it organic; it was supposed to be a whole diversified farm that actually was sustainable. Six thousand acres of one commodity is a monoculture, it's not an organic farm, but you can get certified by bringing in all your ingredients from all over the world in trains, and bringing in all your compost, and not spraying, and essentially that's all it works down to. And then you label this and you flood the entire West Coast of North America with organic carrots, and you push out of business all the small people. So, what are we? We are a commodity again. So that's what you have got to be careful with: make sure you are branding your product with your name, not with the fact that it is organic.

The International Organic Conference was in Victoria in 2002. Victoria hosted the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements Conference. There were over two thousand delegates there from all over the world. I think ninety-five countries were represented. There was an amazing split in the audience between big organic and the people that believed in the whole organic movement.

There was a passionate speaker who said she was surrendering her dairy certification. She was one of the first dairy farms to ever be certified in Washington State, or Oregon – one of them. She had been certified for twenty-some years. And she said she would never be organic again, because if they would certify Horizon to be organic then she was in the wrong movement.

And Horizon Dairy farm – if you don't know that – they have a series of farms. They have some small. They support some family farms. They also have some dairy farms that have some eight to ten thousand milking herd in Idaho that are standing on dirt as far as you can see and they never get to eat a blade of grass. And they stand under sprinklers in the summer because it's so hot. And yet that can be certified as organic.

So, there is a different movement out there than there was in the eighties. So be careful thinking organic is your saviour – it's not.

If we look at apples, which are one of B.C.'s products (and I was one of the guys that was involved in the apple industry for years as a production horticulturalist), the apple industry in this province has actually in the last few years survived on the depreciation of the assets on the farm. That means every year they lose more and more money; they don't actually make any money. There are very few

people in the orchard industry making any money. So they did make money in the old days and they've managed to survive on that. In 2000 the cost of production in Canadian was fifty-three cents a kilo. On an average they lost twenty-two cents a kilo for every kilo of apples they produced.

What does that mean to you as a grower? So you work all year, you grow these nice looking apples. You pack them in boxes. You send them to the packing house in September. And in January you get your letter from the packing house thinking that it's a cheque. You open it up and it's actually a bill from the packing house telling you owe them twenty thousand dollars because they packed your apples and they weren't worth what it cost to pack them. And that's not a joke - that's a reality for a lot of our orchardists. And that's why more and more of them are going out of business.

### **soundbite**

*Jon Steinman:* And again these recordings of Brent Warner were recorded last week in Nanaimo. One of the nice contrasts presented at this event recorded on October 19<sup>th</sup> was that the hosts of the event, Food Link Nanaimo, supplied a great spread of local foods for any of those in attendance. Of greatest significance to this next clip we're about to hear was the local apple juice available at the event, collected from household trees in the Nanaimo area, and pressed by community volunteers. While this apple juice was indeed 100% from the area, many Canadians relying on Product of Canada labels may be surprised to discover that some, if not all of the apple juice in the package, is from somewhere else.

*Brent Warner:* Who controls the world apple market? Right now today if you are drinking apple juice, other than the apple juice that you are drinking right here tonight, I can guarantee you that you are probably drinking a portion of that juice is Chinese.

If you buy Tree Top juice, if you buy Sun-Rype juice, if you buy BC Tree Fruits juice, it won't even tell you on there. It will say, "Bottled in Canada." It will say, "A product of Canada," or whatever. A portion of that is juice blended that came in from China.

China owns the apple juice market in the world. They will soon own the apple market. This apple right here you can get in any store in Nanaimo at any time of the year. You can get it in Sidney, you can get it in Victoria, you can get it in Kelowna - in the heart of our apple industry. This is a beautiful Fuji apple, grown in China, individually packed, comes in those little styrofoam sleeves. So if you see an apple that has got a styrofoam sleeve on it, and has a funny looking little logo on it which doesn't actually say anything it has just got some stars, that's a Chinese apple. And it will be there at the same price or less than an Okanagan

apple. So the apple that is grown a mile from where you buy it actually costs you more to purchase than the apple that came two-thirds the way around the world.

That's the U.S. apple acreage in – what are we - 2007? About 2001, the State of Washington pulled out 25,000 acres of Red Delicious one winter, piled them up and burnt them. The Okanagan industry is only 22,000 acres total. So they pulled out in one winter more apples than we grow in this province of one variety and piled it up and burnt it because Red Delicious isn't returning any money.

So our industry here is much more of a niche market industry. We need to get our consumers behind our industry or our industry is going to keep crunching down, probably to end up at about two thousand acres.

**Song – “Apple Juice,” by Judy and David, from the album Songs from the Boombox, All Together Now Entertainment (CDN)**

Yeh, I'll drink anything  
Just as long as it's apple juice  
Apple juice, baby, apple juice

I'll drink anything  
Just as long as it's apple juice  
Apple juice, baby, apple juice

Oh, don't make me crazy  
Don't make me choose  
If you got apple juice  
Then you know you can't lose  
I'll drink anything  
Just as long as it's apple juice

Apple juice  
Won't you give me some?  
Apple juice  
Got to get me some  
Apple juice  
Lay it on me now  
Apple juice  
Let me here you say  
“Apple”  
“Apple”  
“Joo-oo-oose”  
“Joo-oo-oose”  
I'll drink anything  
Just as long as it's apple juice

*Jon Steinman:* And that last tune was a song by Canadian Juno award winners Judy and David and their tune "Apple Juice." And you may laugh when you hear this: believe it or not, Judy Gershon was my Grade 7 music teacher. So I'm sure she'll be amused to know that I'm playing her music on this radio program.

And this is Deconstructing Dinner. As we continue on with segments from Brent Warner's presentation, this next clip nicely introduces some of the topics to be covered on future broadcasts. The first is the idea of supply chains: that is, the many channels food goes through before ending up on our plates. The dominant model upon which most of our food system is now structured is one that sees many of the channels making plenty of money, except for the one at the bottom - the farmer.

In the next few weeks we will hear more recordings from my trip to Vancouver Island, and, in this case, to learn more about a model that is being created to ensure that the farmer doesn't get screwed, as they most often are in today's food systems. Another topic Brent introduces is bio-fuels, and their impact on agriculture. This will also be a topic for next week, and you can stay tuned for that.

But first here's Brent Warner.

*Brent Warner:* This is a philosophy here that is driving the international agricultural movement today. This is what I would have been taught in university in the seventies - in any ag program. If you are going to go out there in agriculture you should go out there, and in order to survive in agriculture you have got to get better and better and better at less and less and less. So, an example would be, if you are going to be a strawberry grower, grow as much as you can and make certain that you are the best strawberry grower. That's all you want to do is grow those strawberries. And so that's what farmers were taught: get better and better at growing a monocrop, whatever that crop is.

Meanwhile the big companies were out there saying, "Well, that's not working. We're going to actually buy up the whole value chain." So if they were looking at chicken, they wanted to control actually having the eggs hatching them, putting the chickens in barns, then taking the processing plant, owning the processing plant, then owning the actual packaging plant, and taking them right to market. So they own everything: they set the price. Where you as a grower that is growing a commodity like strawberries or chicken now have to go that company and ask them what they're going to pay you. And they keep paying less and less. So we have just become price takers. We in commodity agriculture don't get to make the decision as to what we are getting paid.

So I am hoping that we are at the cusp of turning it around. Otherwise, this is the future for the Canadian farmer. And that happens to be a dodo bird, if you don't happen to know what that is. And they're gone.

The change is continuing, and it's ramping up with this whole bio-fuels movement and more interest in growing less than food. So, in the next ten years the industry will see more innovation than we've seen in the last hundred years. And I believe that entirely, that because of the bio-fuels pressure on ag land we are going to see more and more farmland taken out of actual food production. So this leaves little room for you as a farmer to be marginally successful. You have got to be at the top of your game here.

We don't have a problem growing food in the world. All of you are aware we produce more food in the world than we can eat. Distribution we have all kinds of problems with. We do seem to have a problem with growing the right type of food and getting it to people because we have this huge overweight and obesity crisis. And that crisis is not just with us in North America, it's everywhere. It's in China. As China develops and brings in our wonderful North American diet, they are starting to see huge problems with the richer classes becoming heavier and having more health issues.

*Jon Steinman:* Brent Warner's last comment on the health issues facing Canadians introduces our next segment and the title of today's broadcast. What is often not discussed when looking at how our food system is structured is how this structure can impact health, and so long as our food system continues to pump out the industrial food it does and operate at the expense of local small-scale farming, then the health care issues facing Canadians are only going to get worse.

Now I will remind you that the featured speaker on today's broadcast is a provincial government employee speaking on such topics. I can say with relative certainty that Brent Warner is probably the only person in British Columbia's Ministry of Agriculture and Lands who would come out and make such remarks. So while it may sound promising that someone within the Department can speak with such concern, his opinions are not in any way a sign of what actions the province seems to take when it comes to protecting local food. This was of course made most apparent when new meat inspection regulations came into effect on September 30<sup>th</sup> of this year, forcing many small-scale farmers and processors to close up shop.

But coming back to the focus of today's broadcast, here's Brent Warner, suggesting that the diet that has fueled Canadians since food became as industrialized as it is today is over - that diabetes is just too expensive to continue to take care of.

*Brent Warner:* That diet is over and you are going to see in the next few slides why it's over. We cannot continue to be on this road. Since the Second World War until now - that's long enough. We can't do this anymore.

Because we have done this for so long we don't know what a food system looks like. So our kids' generation thinks that the thing on the left is a food system. The thing in the middle – next to that arrow – does anybody know what it is? Yeh, somebody's seen one before. It's a deep-fried Twinkie, for those of you who that haven't heard. In a lot of American agricultural fall fairs they have huge line-ups so you can buy one of these things, right next to the deep-fried chocolate bar. Deep-fried Coca Cola is the hottest item out there right now. So that's really not the same type of food system that we are talking about tonight, which would be more one on the right hand side.

What are some of the things that have got us to this point? There's some really cool statistics out there that alter things dramatically. If you look at 1975, consumption of pop in North America surpassed the consumption per capita of milk. And that is a very dramatic shot if you look at that, because it's right about then that we started to see the issues with childhood obesity - 1975. All of a sudden our kids aren't drinking milk anymore, they are drinking pop. And the difference between a child that drinks milk and a child that drinks pop and eats exactly the same diet is they are consuming about five hundred calories more a day than they would be with milk and that is a serious issue. If they are drinking a Big Gulp (most of you have seen this experiment) - forty-eight teaspoons of sugar in a Big Gulp. One - and some kids drink two and three of those a day.

And we should be very cognizant that we have a serious obesity issue in this province. Not as bad in this province as some other provinces. But obesity is the indicator, it's not the disease. But it brings with it many, many diseases that are a huge problem. This graph was in 2000. We have two of our interior provinces – Manitoba, Saskatchewan – teetering on the edge of thirty per cent obesity now. We have a number of states – I think seven states have gone over the thirty per cent obese population.

So these are huge warning signals of catastrophe on the horizon. Why? Because obesity is directly linked to some major diseases. Diabetes is the most expensive disease there is for the health care system. In this province, as of 2002, we have one in three of our children born at risk to type 2 diabetes.

When most of you were a lot younger type 2 diabetes was called ... anybody know? Late-onset diabetes. It wasn't called type 2. It was only us older people that got this disease. You got it after the age of forty.

Now we have kids in this province at the age of eight, nine, ten with type 2 diabetes. We have kids in the Vancouver Children's Hospital waiting for liver transplants because their livers have collapsed due to the fat load that they have consumed in their body by the age of ten. And I made a presentation to a bunch of medical people and I was told that by some doctors from Children's so that is not something I was even aware of.

Eighty per cent of this problem is directly related to diet and exercise. We could eliminate type 2 diabetes from kids' lives with proper diet and exercise: there are no drugs involved. So we've induced this disease. We can correct it simply by feeding them and getting them to move around.

So this epidemic (and this was a speech delivered at the Centre for Disease Control/WHO Conference), if you looked at any epidemic – whether it's influenza or plague from the Middle Ages – they are not as serious as the epidemic of obesity in terms of health impact on our country and our society. He was talking about the United States: it's the same as Canada.

Just a couple of interesting graphs coming up here. This is the U.S. health care costs, projected outward, up to 2006. Do you think there is any government in the world that can actually fund something like that? It's an exponential increase. And as you get higher and higher up there you eventually run out of money. So you think, well okay, that's the Americans. And we do know they have got issues with their health care system.

I'm going to bring it a lot closer to home here. This is B.C. This is a budget project that was done by a bunch of treasury analysts for this province. And if you look at the bottom graph it's from 2004 up to 2017. And if you look at the three - we're only going to look at three things here. We are going to look at the health budget, which is the purple line at the top. We've increased that here traditionally around eight per cent annually. And you know that that's not enough. We know still have huge waitlists for hip transplants and heart issues. Okay, so at eight per cent a year – project that out to 2017.

Education is in the middle. You know our education system is not well-funded at this point. We have issues there. We're only going to give a three per cent growth, which is essentially nothing in relation to inflation. It's less than inflation.

By 2017, if you look at all other government revenues, they have dipped below zero. What that means is that, by 2017, this province will only be able to fund health care and education at a minimal rate: there will be nothing else going on in government. There will be no highways. There will be no income assistance. There will be nothing else other than health care and education. And this is done by your own government.

This is the graph that actually created the B.C. fruit and vegetable scheme that we'll talk about here in a minute. It is also the graph that is funding the Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon.

Government has got a wake-up call with this graph. It doesn't matter who you are in government: this was presented to the Premier and all the cabinet ministers about a year-and-a-half ago that we have got to change direction here.

So, you might be hearing about the carbon crisis and global warming. You're not hearing a lot about this graph. But this is in government is called the "doomsday slide."

I was just speaking to Edmonton yesterday. They have got their own version of this and I think it's 2015 for them. So health care is crunching government right now - within ten years.

### **soundbite**

*Jon Steinman:* And this is Deconstructing Dinner, a syndicated weekly one-hour radio program and podcast produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio in Nelson, British Columbia. I'm Jon Steinman. A reminder that this broadcast will be archived on our website. Again, that's [cjly.net/deconstructingdinner](http://cjly.net/deconstructingdinner), and more information on our program is also found there.

Now moving beyond health *care*, yet another major concern posed by the conventional food system is of course food safety and *its* impacts on our health. There seems to be a steady rise in food safety concerns right across the continent, and Brent Warner speaks on these issues.

*Brent Warner:* The other thing that has happened to people in our food system is, those two people in hundred that work in our agricultural system understand it. They know they can pick up an apple and eat it off the ground. But, for the other ninety-eight, food scares the crap out of them, because all they ever see in the paper is one disaster after another.

In the last month, we've had three, four E. coli recalls of hamburger. We had the biggest recall of hamburger ever about a week ago: twenty-seven million pounds of hamburger in the States were recalled because of E. coli.

Apple juice is a scary thing to a lot of people. Apple juice, about seven or eight years ago now, had a big incident. Odwalla, which is a big juice company down in California, killed a bunch of people. I think two or three died on the West Coast. There were many, many sick because they got E. coli into their process.

So the result of that, and what I'm saying here, is all of these things are tied together: one incident like that in apple juice changed the apple juice picture for all of you. Any of you that are growers - myself in extension - we had to scramble that year to get people to even drink any juice, because the only thing that was in the paper was, "Apple juice has got a contamination: it's going to kill you." Do you think the average consumer understands enough that they are going out and search out an apple juice that they can drink? No they're not. They're just going to quit drinking apple juice. Sales just bottomed out: nobody bought any juice.



What happened after that was the U.S.D.A. – U.S. Department of Agriculture - came back and said, “Well, we think all you guys now should pasteurize, because if you pasteurize of course you are going to kill the E. coli.” Which is fine, except it’s a big and expensive process.

Up until actually that year all pasteurization had been by heat and then there was some new ultraviolet equipment that came out. So actually a company out of Massachusetts invented this machine that a smaller grower could get for about ten thousand dollars, which would pass their requirements for pasteurization. So what the U.S. government said is, “You either pasteurize or you put on the label (that I’ve blown up there in black for you). That’s a label that has to go on every one of your containers, if you don’t pasteurize, and it also has to go on the door of your cooler.”

So here’s mom, she’s coming into the farm, she’s going to get some apple juice. She reaches for the cooler and she essentially reads this thing and it says, “If you drink this it’s going to kill your kid.” So how does that work with your marketing? Probably not so good. Even though your name’s on there, she reaches for the cooler, she sees that. She picks up the litre: this has to be just like your cigarette label, there’s a good chance that if you drink this it’s going to kill you. So sales for juice bottomed out.

So there is very little unpasteurized juice in the United States because you just can’t sell it. We came very, very close to the same thing here. And I’m still not convinced we’re not going to be here – within a year, eighteen months, two years we will be pasteurizing.

On the Island we have a bunch of pasteurization going on now. Some of the bigger growers have just quit selling juice unless it’s pasteurized. They take it to one or two of the other growers that bought pasteurization equipment.

So food, to the average person, they don’t know anything about it. E. coli with meat; E. coli with what this year? Spinach. So spinach sales - we lost hundreds of millions of dollars in commercial spinach sales. The bright light in spinach was, if you were a grower in a farmers’ market in B.C. and you had spinach, you couldn’t keep it on the shelf, because everybody still likes spinach. They knew you were a grower, they knew you didn’t have a problem, and they came and bought your spinach. But you didn’t see any spinach moving through the grocery chains at all. So if you were shipping through Walmart or something like that you were done. Growers went bankrupt in California.

*Jon Steinman:* I will note that the meat recall Brent referred to at the beginning of that last clip was meat originating from a facility owned and operated by Cargill, a familiar company name on this show. And this incident will most definitely be making it into an upcoming broadcast of Deconstructing Dinner, because it occurred not long after I interviewed the President of Cargill Canada, Len

Penner, just this past September. We spoke on this topic of food safety, and his comments prove to be timely in light of this recent recall. You can stay tuned for that in the coming weeks.

So it is no news to listeners of Deconstructing Dinner that the food system in this country seems to be in need of some major changes. And, again, we will in the coming weeks be exploring an exciting model being created in Nanaimo that responds to these food system concerns. Again, this was one of a number of stories I covered while visiting Nanaimo last week, including the launch of a *test* farmers' market that turned out to be an amazing success.

Brent Warner of B.C's Ministry of Agriculture obviously agrees that such food system changes need to take place, and he speaks of the importance of such regional food systems and the farmers' market boom.

*Brent Warner:* So, I think it's time we have to change the food system. That's why you are here tonight. We can't keep doing what we are doing with food. And what I have it put it down there as cheap; high fat; high sugar; no brand; no regional loyalty; no awareness or concern for what we are eating or feeding our children. Obviously, it doesn't work. That's why you see those numbers. That is why you see that doomsday slide.

We have suddenly gotten to the point where some of us understand that food is related to our health. And that's what is driving these campaigns. That's why you are seeing governments investing in buy local; buy fresh; buy here; it's good for your health; five a day, ten a day - push it up.

So we're seeing some real new interest here and these regional food systems are starting to develop, and they provide all kinds of solutions. They provide a health solution, because we get people eating more local fruits and vegetables. We can actually lower the cost if you are buying directly from the farmer, and yet the farmer makes more money because we eliminated all the middle people. Demographics: the smaller portions we can actually deliver through CSAs. We've got to watch our demographics. If you are farmer right now, we've got a major boom happening in old people - not a lot of young people. So you have got to watch what you are doing. It's a whole different topic on what you are marketing. You are not going to be marketing fifty pound bags of potatoes as much as five pound bags.

Availability to the inner city poor: we have got to get programs back into the cities. And I am going to talk about that in a second. That is where a lot of our issues are. You can't expect low-income inner city people to eat better if we don't supply them with food somehow. And if all of the grocery stores are pulled out of the urban cores, how do we do that? I say we do that with putting our farmers' markets back down there. (applause) And that's what we have to do.

Here's a snapshot of what's happened on Vancouver Island. For those of you that haven't been here long enough, this will be quite entertaining. For those of you that have been here that long, you'll probably shed a tear or two.

In 1980 we had thirty dairy farms from Duncan south on the Saanich Peninsula. We had a commercial vegetable co-op. We actually had growers growing in a co-op and taking their broccoli and cauliflower and onions and potatoes into a building in Victoria, washing them, putting them into the grocery stores and making money. We had two hundred acres of loganberries. We had greater than two hundred acres of potatoes in Central Saanich.

In 1982 I started a direct marketing association, and it was a struggle with twenty farmers. We had gross sales that year of about two million.

Fast forward to 2007, we have two dairy farms left on the Saanich Peninsula, one of which is teetering and probably will be gone in a year. Commercial vegetable co-op: bankrupt - gone. One acre of logans left. Zero acres of potatoes.

A bright spot is the Direct Farm Marketing Association. There is a change happening on the Saanich Peninsula. We have a group of farmers that have developed a little differently there. The farmer's market industry is not as big as people going to the farm, and that's just the history. But we have an association there that grossed over twenty million dollars by my estimate last year. It employs over five hundred people directly on farms.

There is a successful ag farming business on the Saanich Peninsula, and there are half a million people there. That's not a lot of people, but it's enough to have this size of an industry.

The other positive thing is farmers' markets. Farmers' markets are on fire in North America and in B.C. I started the Farmers' Market Association seven years ago with a bunch of farmers. We have sixty-five certified markets in this province now modeled on the California model. These are "make it, bake it, grow it" markets. There are a lot more markets than that in B.C. You can call yourself a farmers' market and sell everything from China: there's no regulation. But if you are a certified B.C. Association of Farmers' Markets market and have a highway sign, then you are a "make it, bake it, grow it" market.

So everybody in there, in theory, is "make it, bake it, grow it." Now, I know there is some slippage and a little bit of fiddling around here and there but, buy and large, it's a fabulous system and it's working.

*Jon Steinman:* As we near the end of today's broadcast, let's quickly explore what's happening on a provincial level to respond to the food system concerns presented on today's broadcast. We for one have this doomsday slide Brent referred to in regards to provincial health care spending here in B.C.

So what is the province of British Columbia for one doing about it? Well, one initiative Brent Warner has helped launch is getting B.C. produce into school classrooms. While the project is far from being one that supports local growers, it does at the very least support B.C. growers, and gets this food into schools that are notorious for junk food, and more junk food.

I joined Brent for a quick meal prior to his presentation in Nanaimo, and it was as we were eating that he received a call that more funding had come in to keep this program going. And here's Brent Warner speaking about this program.

*Brent Warner:* In order for us to continue and keep changing the system, we have to make this link between local, food and health. And that's what you saw in that graph. If we don't soon make that link we are in trouble.

So we are doing that with health agencies. We are promoting eating local. I am going to show a couple of quick shots on these two new programs we've got going on, which I think are the ones that are making it fun.

In 2005 the Premier announced the B.C. School Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program. We started with ten schools, with two schools in each of the five Health Regions. We started to set up a system to put fresh, B.C. grown fruits and vegetables into every child's hand in this province twice a week, every second week. The goal was to change their idea about their food system; it was not to be the only thing that they would ever eat that was fresh.

This is now gradually ramping up. We're up to 164 schools. We're taking in 300 more schools in January. We're taking 500 more in September. And by 2009 1,655 schools in this province will be eating B.C. fruits and vegetables.  
(applause)

This gives you an idea of what that looks like. 1655 schools – it's 579 servings. It's a million pieces of B.C. product a serving week. That is a ten acre orchard every time these kids sit down.

The annual cost is twelve million a year, and that is coming out of the Health budget, because we are trying to change that graph. So, a million pieces, ten acres of apples per week. We'll consume the entire kiwifruit crop in B.C. in one week. This will make stronger rural communities because the apple industry can survive.

We only buy fruit at what it costs our growers to produce it. We're able to deliver this whole program in a child's hand for about twenty-six cents a serving. These kids can't go down the street to a grocery store and buy that apple for what we can put it into Haida Gwaii.

We have got fruit in Haida Gwaii this year - air freighted in - so that those kids can understand what the food system looks like as well. We have massive problems in our Native population with obesity, probably double what we have in the rest of the population.

We have also got new product innovation. I don't know if you are aware of it, but all the vending machines at schools are going to be changed: all are being ripped out. No more pop. (applause) The new machines are coming back. There is going to be water and baked products and these new fresh fruit products. There are two companies in B.C. now that do sliced apples, sliced pears - squirt ascorbic acid or vitamin C on them, put them in a bag, and they last twenty-one days refrigerated. The beauty of those - and you all go, "Why can't those kids just eat an apple?" I know, but for these kids, that's a different product. Apple here, sliced apple there: that's two different products. They don't think of them as the same product. And that's good for us, because I need a variety of products.

We don't grow oranges or bananas and so what we do give them are apples, pears, bagged carrots. We give them Italian prune plums. We give them greenhouse tomatoes, Japanese cucumbers. And I'm sure I've forgotten something. We are trying to get grapes in there next year.

All our product that goes in the schools has to come off a HACCP-certified line, which means I have to know when some child gets sick in Fort St. John within two phone calls where that product came from. When you are delivering to kids in the school system funded by government you know it's got to be squeaky clean. So we do know all of that.

*Jon Steinman:* Another positive initiative being launched by the Province of British Columbia are coupons primarily being distributed to low-income households. The coupons are not for complimentary Kraft Dinner, but are to be used at any one of a number of farmers' markets operating throughout the province. And Brent describes yet another positive program to increase the presence of local food in the diet, and in doing so, support local farmers.

*Brent Warner:* And finally the last program, which is equally exciting but not as big yet, the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program started this year. We've tried to pilot it the same way.

We've got five farmers' markets in this province. We are marrying them up with pregnancy outreach organizations in each of those five centres. And what's going on is we are now modelling a program that was done in the United States.

So in each of those five communities we are giving up to thirty-five recipients fifteen dollars worth of coupons - low-income moms, generally, and breast-feeding moms. And they get to take those coupons to a farmers' market and they can buy B.C. product.

The beauty of the coupons is they are not just for fruits and vegetables. They can use that coupon for protein, and a lot of our farmers' markets now are able to sell meat. We managed last year, after fifteen years, to get Health to allow us to sell eggs at farmers' markets. Now, that was amazing. So you are now allowed to sell eggs at farmers' markets.

And you are also allowed to sell frozen meat, which is a huge coup. Frozen meat. And the science behind that was: we had these discussions over, "What would the meat temperature have to be?" And of course the farmers are going, "How are we going to know what that is?" We got down to as long as the meat is as hard as this table you can sell it. So that's how scientific it is. So, as long as you are freezing it hard at home and you're bringing it in a cooler, you can then sell it as frozen meat.

So, this is a huge program. It has massive ramifications. One thing the U.S. has done a program like this right across the United States for over twenty years. (I know I am already five minutes over.) Their redemption rate is about fifty per cent on coupons; ours in the first year is seventy-eight and it's probably going to come in at about eighty-eight per cent redemption. That means there is huge interest in the community to get these.

So we now are moving to write this project up. And hopefully this will only cost \$140,000 dollars. I would like to see this program go province-wide: every farmers' market participating in this, every low-income community participating in this. All this money is available in the health care budget if we can convince government that this is going to change the health of these people, of all of us.

So, I think this is an exciting program. It's hugely exciting for farmers. For farmers, as a result of the School Fruit and Vegetable Program, realizing that, just because we deliver school fruit and vegetables every other week, what do you think those kids do when they go home? They say, "Mommy, Mommy, guess what we had today? We had Italian prune plums." And Mommy says, "What's that?" And so then they go to Save-On-Foods, who is our major distributor. Save-On has got these big displays, showing this logo - "This is what your kids are eating in schools this week." All the other stores are going to be buying into that. And so, all of a sudden, now we have an educated child showing a parent what they should be buying.

The results tabulated by the University of Victoria show that it has changed families' lives. In one year, we have statistically significant information that shows that families said, "Yes, it changed what I buy at the grocery store." So how much better than that can it get?

So, I'm overtime. I gotta go, folks. Thank you. (applause)

*Jon Steinman:* And that was Brent Warner, an Industry Specialist in Direct Farm Marketing with British Columbia's Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. Based in Victoria, Brent has been involved in agriculture for over thirty years. I recorded him speaking on October 19<sup>th</sup> in Nanaimo at an event hosted by Food Link Nanaimo, an organization working towards ensuring reliable access to healthy food for Nanaimo and area residents.

There will be more information on today's broadcast found on our website at [cjly.net/deconstructingdinner](http://cjly.net/deconstructingdinner), where this show will also be archived. And you can expect a few more broadcasts in the coming weeks that will feature recordings from this visit to Vancouver Island, so stay tuned for that.

### **ending theme**

*And that was this week's edition of Deconstructing Dinner, produced and recorded at Nelson, British Columbia's Kootenay Co-op Radio. I've been your host Jon Steinman. I thank my technical assistant John Ryan.*

*The theme music for Deconstructing Dinner is courtesy of Nelson-area resident Adham Shaikh.*

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