

**Show Transcript
Deconstructing Dinner
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Transcript – Pat Yama**

Jon Steinman: And you're tuned in to another installment of Deconstructing Dinner – a syndicated weekly one-hour radio show and podcast produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio, CJLY in Nelson, British Columbia, I'm Jon Steinman.

Today's episode is being recorded from the shores of the Georgia Strait on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. I'm here in the community of Courtenay attending the annual conference of the Canadian Farm Writers Federation. In just a short while I'll be embarking on a short trip up to the community of Campbell River where I'll then be boarding a boat and taken to one of the many controversial open net salmon farms operating in this region. What's unique about this trip, is that only days earlier I was sitting in a courtroom of the British Columbia Supreme Court where the very regulations governing these farms is being challenged by a group of petitioners led by well-known scientist, Alexandra Morton. Along with the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands who is a respondent to this case, the *company* who is being used as the test case in this possibly precedent-setting decision is Marine Harvest – the very same company who's fish farm I'm about to visit. So you can stay tuned for some *interesting* recordings in the next few weeks.

But until then, on today's broadcast, we'll take you to Ottawa, where on Monday, September 29th, a national debate on agriculture took place leading up to the October 14th federal election.

Hosted by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and broadcast on CPAC, the Cable Public Affairs Channel, weighing in on the debate was Minister of Agriculture and Conservative Party candidate for the riding of Battleford, Saskatchewan - Gerry Ritz; Liberal Party Member of Parliament for the riding of Malpeque, Prince Edward Island - Wayne Easter; the New Democrat Party or NDP's Member of Parliament for Sault Ste Marie Ontario - Tony Martin; and Green Party candidate for the riding of Dauphin-Swan River-Marquette in Manitoba - Kate Storey.

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On today's one-hour broadcast we'll have a chance to listen to *four* segments from the September 29th agriculture debate in Ottawa. The full *two*-hour debate is available on CPAC's website and that video will be linked to from the Deconstructing Dinner website at deconstructingdinner.ca.

The debate was moderated by Hugh Maynard who among some of his roles within agricultural media is the Secretary-Treasurer of the Canadian Farm Writers Federation, the CFWF, the host of the conference I'm here in Courtenay attending.

And so here is the *first* segment of opening remarks from the four candidates at the 2008 agriculture debate in Ottawa.

2008 Agriculture Debate

Gerry Ritz: Well thank you everyone. Good morning. Tout le monde. I was chatting with Wayne as we came down the stairs, we have a bank meeting just next door so anybody that needs to renegotiate their farm loan for harvest it would be a good opportunity to kill two birds with one stone here this morning. As you all know, Conservatives have one bedrock agricultural principle – farmers first. That seems obvious but Liberals and NDP fail to even mention farmers in budgets that they supported. As you know this summer our Conservative government, in partnership with the provinces and territories signed a Growing Forward, a national agricultural framework. That new agreement delivered on our promise to get rid of the flawed Liberal case program. We're working with industry to deliver real results for farmers through new programs such as AgriStability, AgriInvest, and AgriRecovery. We will build on the Growing Forward format with a new agricultural flexibility program. We're committing 500 million dollars to this program. We'll continue to work with industry, provinces and territories to invest this money in key region-specific programming. Conservatives will also invest 50 million dollars to immediately expand livestock slaughter capacity across Canada. A re-elected Conservative government will continue to stand firm for our supply managed sectors. We've delivered real action with cheese compositional standards that makes sure there's real milk in Canadian cheese. Article 28 under GATT and of course the WTO Special Safeguards to protect the supply management.

As a farmer who grew up in Saskatchewan it's insulting that opposition parties don't think that we western Canadian farmers are smart enough to choose how to market our own grain. We remain committed to delivering market freedom in western Canada. Canadian families are looking for safe, healthy foods that our farmers produce. Unfortunately the Liberals thought it was okay to call a completely imported food Canadian if the production costs happened here. In typical Liberal fashion they were more worried about cost than content. Your Conservative government redefined labelling regulations so that any food labeled Product of Canada must be Canadian inside and out. We've delivered real action for food and product safety with 113 million new

dollars in last spring's budget. The Liberals and NDP failed to support that particular action. Our Conservative government has put 200 new frontline food inspectors and we're hiring more. That investment is essential after years of cuts.

In this election Canadian farm families have an important choice, a clear choice. A re-elected Stephen Harper will continue to stand up for Canadian farmers. A Stéphane Dion carbon tax will crush Canadian agriculture. Conservatives will cut the excise tax on diesel in half. Stéphane Dion will drive up that same tax by 175%. Liberals have made all kinds of promises but even their finance critic John McCallum says, "It's just not possible to say which programs and promises they will actually follow through." Farmers know Liberals always start their cuts with agriculture. A re-elected Stephen Harper government will protect Canadian farmers from a crushing carbon tax and will continue to put farmers first in all of our agricultural policies. Thank you.

Hugh Maynard: Thank you Minister Ritz. Thank you for respecting the time. And now we move to Wayne Easter.

Wayne Easter: I thank you very much. Well this debate about agriculture today and the Liberal party will make major investments to support Canadian farm families as we always have. It's also about Canada and the kind of Canada we want. Agriculture policy goes to the heart, I believe of what a national government should be. And that is to use the authorities and the spending powers of the federal government to assist industries in their time of need, be it manufacturing or be it agriculture and there is a split jurisdiction in agriculture. In other words, the federal government should make Canada stronger than the sum of its parts. Liberal governments have shown in the past that that is the way they govern. They have been there for industries in their time of need. Stephen Harper of course, has shown an opposite view – downloading and downsizing in terms of the federal government. Lessening the authority and the responsibility of the federal government and we have certainly seen that in the food safety issue. He hasn't told us where he wants to go but we do have the secret document, which shows the federal government is lessening its responsibility over food safety in this country. This is a government, the Harper government that has clearly failed the farm community and has not lived up to their commitments. It's a Harper government that is based on power and ideology. It's his way, or the high way and we've certainly seen that with his ideological attack on the Canadian Wheat Board in which this government has broken every democratic principle known in the democracy.

A Liberal government will make major investments to help farmers become more fuel-efficient, reward farmers for their contributions to environment, and invest in research for green solutions from agriculture, while also providing specific regional support and solutions for the economic risks that confront farmers. We will put 400 million into emissions reduction credit

program; 250 million into a green farmers fund; 250 million into a fisheries and transportation green fund; 560 million into a regional flexibility fund which is for what farmers asked us to do. Business risk management is what Ontario farmers wanted, that's what they will get under a Liberal government. We'll put in place a new 30 million dollar program to support the promotion of local farm markets and brand Canadian grown products. We'll restore farmer control over a strong democratic Canadian Wheat Board. We'll protect the three pillars of supply management. We'll call for a full cost railway review of the railways who have been gouging farmers in western Canada and we'll call for an immediate moratorium on short-line rail closures. We want farmers to be at the cutting edge of change and to be able to derive economic benefits from environmental change, be paid for what they contribute to the environment and also have a sound, safety net.

HM: Thank you Mr. Easter. We'll now move to Kate Storey - your time.

Kate Storey: I am proud to be here today to represent the Green Party of Canada. I'm a farmer, a real farmer. Organic grain, cattle, cobs, a typical medium-sized, mixed farming operation. I became involved in politics because I don't like what I've been hearing from this Conservative government or from the previous Liberal government. I care about my farm, my family, and my community. I want to be paid fairly for the food that I produce and I want time to enjoy farming without an off-the-farm job and without crushing debt.

The new Growing Forward framework is just more of the same old Liberal/Conservative policy that has caused the destruction of rural Canada - competitive, innovative, growth. When we will learn that what these words really mean. Competitive means low prices. Innovative means high costs. Growth means risk to me, the farmer. These are illusions put out by those who see farms as merely a low-cost producer of cheap ingredients, which will allow other sectors to profit. Value chains are an admission by our governments that they have abandoned the family farm and know that the only profit in agriculture today is in processing and marketing. Expanded trade has never resulted in better farm incomes. As trade has expanded since 1989, trade has doubled and farm incomes have crashed. Yield increases have not been the result of innovative technologies but rather only do to increase fertilizer use and those fertilizer supplies are running out. We need a new plan for Canadian agriculture. A plan, which recognizes today's reality of high costs and a rising demand for quality, local food. A plan that puts farm families first.

The Green Party has that plan. We will research management techniques, which avoid high input costs and minimize risk. We will support orderly co-operative marketing like supply management and we will support the Canadian Wheat Board. We will find ways to encourage young farmers and help them avoid the debt trap. We will revitalize our rural communities by encouraging small farms and local food systems and fair trade. We will

recognize the economic value of environmental protection and pay farmers for their stewardship. The Green Party plan for agriculture recognizes that farm families are the cornerstone of every economy.

HM: And for the last presentation, Tony Martin please.

Tony Martin: Thank you and good morning. I want to thank the Canadian Federation of Agriculture for hosting this debate. Last Saturday night, I was sitting with Jack Tindall and his wife Lou Ann on the front porch of their farmhouse outside of Desbarats in my riding in Sault Ste. Marie in northern Ontario. He's the farmer I brought to Ottawa four years ago during the BSE crisis to meet with the Liberal government and my caucus. They tell me not much has changed since then except there are fewer people farming. They speak of the need for real income security. They're tired of programs being announced to great fanfare and then dropped when they are most needed. Farmers everywhere need a government that will honour their promises and be there for them. The Family Farm Options program introduced by the Conservatives two years ago still hasn't paid out its second and final payment and has now been cancelled. We as New Democrats will revamp Case to make it more predictable, easier to access and quicker to pay out. For too many farmers it's becoming almost too expensive to stay in business with the increasing costs of inputs, particularly energy and fertilizer. Farmers cannot absorb another tax on energy. They like our cap and trade idea, particularly our using the money generated on solutions. And believe me, farmers have lots of solutions.

They want a government that will stand up for them at trade talks with other countries. They want supply management and the Wheat Board to be protected. Jack remembers Brian Mulroney selling farmers out at the offer of free trade and the abandoning of the Tripartite Stabilization Board. This trend of getting rid of anything that pays farmers continues to this day through subsequent Conservative and Liberal governments. The Liberals gave away the family farm to corporations and the Conservatives are giving away the store with their 50 billion dollar corporate tax break. This will leave the cupboard empty as farmers who will be hit hard, have to deal with the coming downturn in the economy.

Yesterday Jack Layton released a New Democrats platform. It is farmer friendly. We have implemented income stabilization programs tailored for each commodity sector. We will focus on family farms that most need the support. We will help preserve orderly Canadian marketing systems and eliminate predatory export practices. We will improve access to farm safety net funding for natural disasters and poor markets. We will support more value-added processing for jobs and local co-ops. Through the competitions act we will limit meat-packers ownership of cattle. We will defend the Wheat Board. We will take action to ensure the food you buy in the store is safe. We will greatly increase the number of inspectors and plants requiring labelling of genetically engineered foods. We will ban terminator seeds, require full

accuracy and accountability for labels stating Made In Canada. We will with partners, implement a Canadian organic food and agricultural strategy. Thank you very much and I look forward to your questions.

JS: And this is Deconstructing Dinner. That was a recording made available by CPAC the Cable Public Affairs Channel who broadcast the September 29th, 2008 agriculture debate in Ottawa. As we head towards the October 14th federal election, debating the subject of food is a rare occurrence within any federal election so for many, some of the topics covered were a refreshing sign that food is indeed receiving some much needed political attention. In these next few segments from the debate, you'll hear mention of genetically engineered foods, community-supported agriculture and local food charters among other innovative projects such as those we like to feature here on the show.

Again, the four candidates who you'll be listening to over the remainder of the hour, are the Green Party's Kate Storey; the Liberal Party of Canada's Wayne Easter; Conservative Party of Canada's Gerry Ritz; and the NDP's Tony Martin. The Bloc Quebecois did not field a representative for the debate.

In this next segment from the debate, discussed is the future of farms in Canada, an important topic that has also been an ongoing one here on Deconstructing Dinner.

And here's debate moderator Hugh Maynard.

HM: I'm going to repeat the questions in English and French to make sure that we're all up-to-date.

- What action will your party take to create a fair and reasonable farm succession system for Canadian farmers.
- What will your party do to allow young farmers to take over farms without an unreasonable debt load. And the third question, la troisième.
- What will your party do to allow all the farmers to retire with dignity and financial security.

So there's three questions there you can address in two minutes. Kate Storey.

KS: Family farms are the source of young farm workers who understand the relationship between soil and weather and livestock. These are intuitive skills, which take years to develop and cannot be taught in a classroom. And yet, our governments do not value this human resource. They have neglected to help our young farmers to find ways to start farming without a crushing debt, which makes it impossible for them to earn a fair wage. The

retiring parents need a steady income. The young farmer needs freedom from debt. A government which truly wanted to help young farmers would set up a third party non-profit agency to guide the gradual transfer of farm ownership without indenturing the next generation to the banks.

The Green Party would help farmers help themselves to transfer those assets and to avoid interest payments. This is especially important in today's uncertain debt market. We do not want to bind our young farmers to debt while interest rates rise over the next years. By setting up a legal agreement, the parents get a steady retirement income; the young farmers would avoid interest payments. Many families have attempted to do this type of transfer themselves but with today's multi-million dollar operations, the cost of a mistake can be enormous. This agency would ensure a legal transaction, deals with any tracks and complications and ensure a plan to transfer the estate, if necessary. Of course, the banks would not like this scheme as it prevents them from saddling yet another generation with debt. Perhaps that is why both Liberal and Conservative political parties have ignored this elegant solution to the farm succession. Thank you.

HM: Thank you. I'll move to Tony Martin and the question, farm succession.

TM: Well thank you very much and I think this is a really important question. And I think we need to understand what we're asking here. If you're talking about transferring your land to somebody else to make some income to pass it on to your kids, that's one thing, or selling off your land. If you're talking about having your kids take over your farm, moving the family farm from one generation to the next, that's a completely different challenge and question altogether. And I know when I sit down and talk to the farmers in my area and I look at who's running the farms in East Algoma in the Sault Ste. Marie area, it's not young people. And the farmers themselves are really concerned that their young people that they've sent away and they've spent a lot of money educating, some of them to agricultural schools, are just not interested in coming back because the farm isn't viable anymore. The family farm isn't viable anymore. And this has happened you know over a period of 10 to 15 years under the stewardship of our Conservative and Liberal colleagues here. We need to get serious about protecting the family farm. We need to be doing some things that say to the young people, farming is a good way to make living. Farming can be viable. You know you don't need to live in poverty. You don't need to have two or three jobs off the farm to make ends meet. We need to be putting in our platform things that will attract young people. Young people who, you know, want to start a career and want to have a family like, you know the commitment we made yesterday to a new child benefit that will give \$400 per month per child, tax free up to children of age 18. This could be the beginning of a decent basic income in our country for farm families. Also the introduction of more daycare spaces so that our farm families can be confident that even though they're on the farm perhaps away from the community they can still have access to that really important early learning for their children. This would go

a long ways to attracting young people back to the farm and would make it easier for farmers today who want to pass the farm on to their children for that to actually happen.

HM: Thank you. Mr. Ritz.

GR: Thank you, thank you Patrice for the question. Of course the greatest farm succession program is a positive bottom line. We have made some changes to taxation in the last two years as government. We've increased the capital gains exemption from \$500,000 to \$750,000 which means farms of course paid us tax when selling to the next generation. And another one that we've made a change to, we made it possible for farmers to transfer property to their sons and daughters and postpone the capital gains tax until the land is sold again. That is a huge change. I know when I was buying the farm from my dad this would have been something that we certainly could have and would have made use of.

We've revamped the farm support programs to make it easier for new and beginning farmers to get access to the dollars in those support programs. We have changed the GST from seven to five percent, which makes a tremendous difference when you're selling land and assets; that's another two percent off the top that does not have to be borne by the next generation. Of course as farmers have changed they've gone to a corporate structure, which makes it a lot easier to do rollover provisions than a straight person-to-person type of transition.

And of course in this campaign, we also made the announcement that EI benefits will be available to farm families on a voluntary basis should they decide to take that up. And as we bring young farmers back to the land, they're going to start having families and these EI benefits will be a huge benefit to them at that time.

HM: Thank you and to close the presentation segment, Wayne Easter.

WE: Thank you Chair. The key to bringing young farmers in the industry into the industry is certainly a profitable industry. Being able to receive your cost of production at a fair return on your labour and investment, that's key to bring young people in. Young people are saying today that they don't want to come into the industry because there's not the farm programming and there's not the profit in the sector for them to be able to come in and they are looking to other options. That's sad, because there isn't a more honourable profession in the country than farming and farmers are the generators of economic wealth I believe for this country just that they don't retain enough economic wealth in their own pockets.

So number one is having the kind of income policies and farm income stability programs that we talked about in the previous discussion. And what's needed is a business risk management proposal with that AgriFlex

program that'll allow that income stability and return to cost to production. That's key. The Liberal government had also previously put in place the agriculture skill, the Canadian Agriculture Skill Services, that is a help. And indeed, as the Minister says, the capital gains exemption and succession in terms of taxes also needs to remain in place so that those young farmers coming into the industry are not burdened with unnecessary taxes.

The key to moving ahead is to have a government that believes in developing social and economic policy for the nation as a whole that matter to people on the ground. And you will get that with the Liberal government. They've shown it in the past, a government working in partnership with the industry, not shutting the door if the government or the Prime Minister doesn't agree with your ideology as we have seen in some of the marketing programs.

HM: Thank you everybody. And now we'll move into the four minute segment for the debate we'll start with Kate Storey and you referred to a third party agency. Maybe you can elaborate on that.

KS: This is what farm families are trying to do for themselves. But government should be behind them trying to make it work, to train, to teach, and to lead. Honourable Wayne Easter just said that his government is there for farm families while I haven't seen that on my farm. I have seen policies from that government and the Conservative government that put production first and family farms last. That's why we don't have young farmers. We don't have them because our commodities are worth nothing. Our policies are geared toward over-production, forcing those commodities onto the export market and the prices have been driven so low that our young farmers can't take part in this.

HM: Let's address the question, what are we going to do. We know what the problems are, what are we going to do.

TM: Our colleague from the Green Party talks about another agency and I suppose, you know I'm not sure if more bureaucracy is going to fix this. What our young people who are more educated than we've ever been and who understand the complex forces at play in farming want is they want to know and feel confident that their government, and they haven't felt that for the last 15 years, is going to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them when natural disasters happen, when markets collapse. But particularly when our government goes to some of these trade tables and they start trading away the Canadian, unique Canadian vehicles that we have put in place, you know to support our farmers and to protect our domestic market. With this far out idea that somehow those other countries are going to reduce or do away with their subsidies. It ain't going to happen folks. And our kids know that if the government isn't going to stand with them in these very important discussions and debates, our farming industry is going down the river. And they're not going to come back to the farm.

GR: Thank you Hugh. Of course this is a debate that's gone on for decades. How do you, how do you roll over the farm to the next generation. I've often made comment about reading my grandfather's journals, you know from the 20's, 30's, 40's as his farm developed how do you roll it over to his sons. It's been a problem for years. I know the next generation of farmers is out there. The new and beginning farmers are well-educated, they're innovative and they look at farming from sound, business standards. They tend to focus more on proactive programming than they do on reactive. Yes they want the safety nets there if there is a disaster, weather related or flood, drought or whatever. But they do want to see proactive, they want to see trade. They want to see us out there promoting their product. They want new and innovative ways to process that product so they can value-add and then move it into the marketplace. Product of Canada labelling is a good example. I know we'll get into that in a little bit later.

But I know there are two situations that would destroy the bottom line and would keep young farmers from even entertaining the idea. One is this whole concept of a carbon tax that would rip the heart and soul out of agriculture and another one is anybody trying to raise corporate taxes. Because the vast majority of farms and farmers out there are incorporated and would face those higher rates. That would chase everybody away.

HM: Wayne, last word.

WE: This is where the Harper government gets it all wrong and the Minister's last comment shows how the Harper government has their head in the sand. You know what this country needs and what young people are telling us, that they want to deal with the climate change issue. And what the Minister keeps talking about and is the propaganda campaign coming out of the Prime Minister's Office. The green shift proposal is about the future. Four hundred million dollars under emission credits to the farm community to actually give them credit for the environmental good that they do. Carbon sinks and those kinds of opportunities. Two hundred and fifty million dollar green farm fund so that our young people can be at the cutting edge of environmental change and gain economy from the environmental good that they do. They in fact will receive greater returns. Yes there's a tax on fuel but we had to find the ways to use less fossil fuels not this game of dropping \$0.02 a litre, that was already lost in the market after the Prime Minister's announcements, that's crazy. Young people want to be able to make the changes, help the environment, and gain economy by doing so and they can do that under the Liberal green shift plan.

JS: And this is Deconstructing Dinner, a syndicated weekly one-hour radio show and podcast produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio, CJLY in Nelson British Columbia. I'm Jon Steinman. Today's episode is being brought to you from the 2008 Canadian Farm Writers Federation conference in Courtenay on

Vancouver Island where I now stand, and you can stay tuned for recordings from the conference on future broadcasts.

But today, we continue on with the 2008 Agriculture Debate which, leading up to the October 14th federal election was held in Ottawa on September 29th and hosted by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.

The debate was broadcast on CPAC, the Cable Public Affairs Channel. And weighing in on the debate was Minister of Agriculture and Conservative Party candidate for the riding of Battleford, Saskatchewan - Gerry Ritz; Liberal Party Member of Parliament for the riding of Malpeque, Prince Edward Island - Wayne Easter; the New Democrat Party or NDP's Member of Parliament for Sault Ste Marie Ontario - Tony Martin;; and Green Party candidate for the riding of Dauphin-Swan River-Marquette in Manitoba - Kate Storey.

Today's broadcast will be archived on the Deconstructing Dinner website at deconstructingdinner.ca, and you can link to the full two hour televised broadcast on CPAC by linking to it from our website as well.

In this next segment, we move onto the topic of the environment and in particular a pilot project currently underway in Manitoba called ALUS or Alternative Land Use Services. The program is an incentives-based ecological goods and services project for farmers that recognizes the value of conserving and restoring Canada's natural capital. And here again is debate moderator Hugh Maynard.

2008 Agriculture Debate

HM: So on the question of environmental stewardship and climate change linked together there, will your party implement an adequately funded program like ALUS, Alternative Land Use Services that is incentive-driven and provides a market for the ecological goods and services that farmers provide. The two minute presentation segment, Tony Martin.

TM: Well, I think that's a positive and constructive approach. I know that farmers want to be responsible stewards of their environment because not only does it affect, you know the folks in the cities which seem to be the people raising this issue the most but it affects them very directly too. It affects their future and their ability to farm sustainably into the future. And if we're, as we said in the last question going to turn this business over to our children we need to be doing things today that guarantee that that will be there. Although I do have to tell you that given the increasing cost of inputs in fertilizer and fuel, they're not excited about a new carbon tax that will increase the cost of their fuels. They don't mind talking about it and actually have indicated that they're interested in the cap and trade that we're putting forward. And particularly in the fact that that cap and trade will produce revenues that then we will use not to cut income taxes but to invest very directly and in a focused fashion in the solutions. And as I said before

farmers have lots of good ideas like the one that was just presented in terms of how we bring forward some really good solutions.

What are we saying in this election as platform. Well we're saying that we will implement a Canadian organic food and agriculture strategy, which will include the ban of use of terminator seeds and protect every farmer's right to choose, save, and control their seeds. We're talking about providing transition funding for education, equipment and training for farmers who wish to shift to organic or buy one-tenths integrated pest management systems of agriculture. We also suggest we will support and facilitate environmentally friendly farming methods including low tillage, water conservation, and reduced fertilizer and pesticide use. Thank you very much.

HM: Thank you. And on the question of environmental stewardship and ALUS, Minister Ritz.

GR: Thank you. You know Tony says farmers want to be good stewards. I'll go a little further than that, I know they are good stewards because their future livelihood depends on how they handle their equipment, their land, and so forth. We work closely with farmers and industry to deliver on farm environmental farm plans. They've been taken up extremely well in the last few years under our tenure. The focus was very, very narrow and the original APF and there were a lot of issues that were never addressed. We changed the format, the focus. Those programs are to the point now where they're oversubscribed and we've had to go back to Treasury Board to find more money to develop those programs even further. And these farm plans support common sense innovations like new and better ways to handle manure on livestock farms. GPS steering which may not mean a lot to a smaller farmer but out in my country where we farm on the mile, it makes a tremendous difference on the amount of fertilizer and chemical and so when you apply when the GPS guides you down that field in a much more reasonable way than when you get tired and start to nod off.

We've accelerated the capital gains allowances for renewal energy equipment such as biodigesters, methane recaptures, all of those types of things. And we're seeing more and more the interoperability on the farm in developing those effective ways to make use of those hazardous products that really have no other use. We're giving farmers better and more access to the new generation of pesticides, fertilizers, and so on that are more environmentally friendly. We spend a tremendous amount of money and energy to develop those types of programming. We're working very closely with the organic situation. You have an exemption on the Wheat Board and there are more and more people making use of that and value adding to those products that export out in the world. You know again folks, we're talking about environmental stewardship and you talk about carbon tax you won't see the emissions go down but you will see your fuel bills go up. It's not the right way to go. Thank you.

HM: Thank you. Environmental stewardship. Wayne Easter.

WE: Thank you Chair. And I certainly agree with Doug's question and a Liberal government will in fact work with farmers such they are an important part of the solution. And in fact that's why we put out the challenge and the discussion in terms of the green shift. We discussed that and debated it all summer. And as a result of those discussions and what farmers told us, we did adjust the program. So that there is economic opportunities for the farm community there in terms of dealing with the environmental question. In fact, to the tune that we will put nine billion dollars back into the rural Canada over four years under that program. That's opportunity for Canadian farmers to use new technologies, to use a minimum tillage carbon sinks, to use manure management, land set-asides, produce biomass energy so that farmers can take advantage of that opportunity that is there.

The challenge of this century, I believe is to be environmental change. And we need to ensure that we are a part of that. And how do we make the farm community a part of it? We do it with the kind of program that the Liberals have proposed which will return far more money to the farm community, lessen their dependents on fossil fuels and create economic possibilities for those farmers moving forward. That's where the young people want to go and that's how we make this a better economy for the rural areas and a better country in terms of global change, economic climate change around the world.

HM: Thank you. And we certainly didn't plan this but the last word on environmental stewardship goes to the Green Party.

KS: In a world which is beginning to put a price on carbon, it is important to enable farmers to engage in opportunities to sequester carbon and to recognize their good farm stewardship. The Green Party supports research into sustainable farming methods, carbon sequestration, and energy conservation. We support environmental goods and services programs as a way to reward farmers for the maintenance of clean water, pure air, and diverse ecosystems. Alternative Land Use Services or ALUS is a pilot project in one of which are in the rural municipality of Blanchard in Manitoba in my riding. It is proving to be both popular with land-owners and effective in environmental protection. This program is designed to comply with the trade rules, offers a range of payments depending on the type of habitat. Riparian zones, forests, grasslands, and wetlands can all become an asset to the farmer who values natural ecosystems. The environment is the foundation of all economies. The cost of failing to protect our ecosystems is huge including severe weather, drought, loss of water resources, crop disease, and failed harvests. The market encourages exploitation and results in a boom and bust economy as we can see today. We cannot depend on market forces to bring sustainability. Sustainability takes good public policy and balanced regulation. The Green Party believes that the government should be

proactive in rewarding farmers for proper management now so we can avoid problems later. Thank you.

HM: Thank you all for those presentations. Now we go to the debate segment starting with Tony Martin. What will your party do to fund an ecological goods and services that the farmers are requesting.

TM: Well, a couple of the things we haven't talked about yet under this heading that obviously the Liberals and the Conservatives have not been able to get their head around or get serious about and it's been brought to me again by farmers who – matter of fact in the first meeting I had with my farm community back when I got elected in 2004 was this question of land set-asides. You know for a million reasons, you know it's either wetland or it's some species that's at risk, you know and they're saying – we're losing our land here and nobody seems to be interested in coming and talking to us about what we do about that. I'm suggesting and I'm suggesting it because a farmer suggested it to me, you know there needs to be some form of compensation here. Government needs to be, you know if this land is going to be set aside in the interest of the public good and you know protecting wetlands for the environment or protecting a species which we think is really, really important, then we the government need to be coming to the table and saying – okay how much is this worth to you. Because the conflict that we see now between government and environmental groups and farmers about these issues is unhelpful. It's not productive; it's not constructive.

HM: Can we fund an ALUS program from your party?

WE: Yes we can and that's what I'm talking about in terms of nine billion dollars being returned to the farm community over four years. That's investment environmental change, an investment that will make a difference in farmers' bottom line, that will attract young people into this industry and be at the cutting edge of environmental change. And Tony, you know, I look at your party's platform and it will bring the economy to a stall. And I look at the Conservative Party, the Harperites platform and what they don't tell you is that they also have a plan in terms of the green economy. It's in a document called "Turning The Corner" and they talk about putting real economic impact on Canadians as they increase by taxing and by regulatory programs, putting in place a cost on carbon as well. Does anybody in this room think that won't impact right down the line in terms of gas and diesel and furnace oil prices? What I would like to know from the Minister is how much is their prime program going to cost? And why is their program not going to return benefits to the farm community as the Liberal plan does? Thank you.

HM: Ask the question, Minister.

GR: Thank you Hugh. I'm happy to jump in, I love Wayne going first in the sense of joining in, you're welcome Wayne. We did change the scope of the

environmental farm plans. First and foremost we took office to make sure that what farmers want was acceptable to those programs. I too certainly agree with the premise of the ALUS situation that Doug brought up and a couple of people who I've talked to. That's why my department funded those pilot projects. You know we're assessing how they worked out. We did three across the country to get an idea of what would be included. As I said before the devil's in the details – how much land, how is it administrated, can budgets at the federal and provincial and even the municipal level for that matter, afford to take that on. And those were what the pilot projects were all about. We'll look forward to those results.

We've put a lot of energy, a lot of work into biofuels, both ethanol and biodiesel. The five percent targets that we have on ethanol and two percent on biodiesel take less than five percent of Canadian farmers production capability. The weathers a bigger factor than that Hugh, everybody knows that. And Mr. Easter keeps going back to their tax everything that moves plan as somehow being revenue neutral and I've also heard them say that there'd be no administration costs in 900 million dollars going in and out and no administration costs. Can anybody spell gun registry here?

JS: And this is Deconstructing Dinner and recordings from the September 29th agriculture debate in Ottawa.

In this last segment from the debate, discussed and debated is the topic of Product of Canada labelling – a recently controversial topic - one of which the rules have recently been amended.

Again, the four candidates on the floor are the Green Party's Kate Storey; the Liberal Party of Canada's Wayne Easter; Conservative Party of Canada's Gerry Ritz; and the NDP's Tony Martin.

You'll hear Tony Martin begin the segment of short presentations following this introduction by moderator Hugh Maynard.

HM: So in question seven – products of Canada labelling. We have a question posed by Garnet Etsell from Abbotsford, B.C, he's a turkey producer.

GE: My name's Garnet Etsell and together with our family we operate a turkey farm in Abbotsford, British Columbia. Over the past year, media reports have highlighted consumer confusion over foreign products being labelled as Product of Canada. Farm groups have repeatedly called for labels that clearly show where a product was produced. Although the government announced changes to the food label guidelines, farmers don't feel the measures of the new guidelines address their concerns. Confusion remains around what the label actually means and how it compares to other common labels such as Canada Grade and Canada Fancy. If the new label guidelines are to have any impact, consumers must clearly understand what Product of Canada and Made In Canada mean. Farmers have called for the creation of

an overseeing stakeholder committee to see that the new labels function as they are meant to. How will your party work in partnership with duly elected farm organizations to ensure labelling rules meet the needs of farmers, processors, and consumers. Also, will your party adopt the recommendation of well-funded national communication programs led by industry and consumer stakeholders to promote Canadian food to Canadian consumers.

TM: Thank you very much. And there's two issues at play here in my view. One is the labelling itself and governments making sure there's integrity in that system, that we are actually labelling what in fact is in the product and people know that when they pick something up off the counter and it says Made In Canada that it's truly made in Canada, a product of Canada. We have a number of commitments in our platform for example requiring labelling of genetically engineered foods and farm fish. We will require full accuracy and accountability for labels stating Made In Canada. Example, milk producers in my area are concerned about the products that are in ice cream and people not understanding what that means.

Which brings me to the second part of this which I think is really important which is actually the question – will government put money into a public communications strategy, education of our people. And I say that's essential. We need to be talking to each other. Farmers again that I talk to are very interested in a closer relationship with the consumers of the products that they're producing. And in fact there are a number of really exciting and interesting new initiatives happening across this country that my colleague, the actual Agri-critic NDP Alexander Atamanenko has heard as he's crossed the country over the last six months doing a food security tour. He's met with people, grassroots movements who are taking food matters into their own hands through community harvests, 100 mile diets, community supported agricultural products, local brandings, branding, co-ops, restaurant farmer agreements and city food charters. So today I urge you to judge every single word spoken by the Conservative and Liberal parties and to measure that against their actions and their failing to help farmers and farming in this country. What we need I believe in Ottawa after this election is a New Democratic government with more Members of Parliament committed to the kinds of things that I've spoken about here today. Thank you very much.

HM: Thank you. Minister Ritz.

GR: Thank you for the question. Of course when Canadians go to the grocery store they want to be able to find Canadian foods and assured that's what it is they're buying. We did change these regulations a short time ago, they will come into effect January 1st of 2009 to make sure that foods labelled Product of Canada are Canadian inside and out. For products put together in Canada with imported ingredients, they will be labelled Made In Canada with imported ingredients. Truth in labelling, what a good concept. We consulted with thousands of Canadians about the new definition for the product of

Canada and more than 90% of thousands of responses agreed with our direction. I know Wayne Easter himself has said, "The new regulations would provide consumers with honest information on the contents they purchase and the changes would also increase the consumption of Canadian products." So that speaks to the 100 mile diet, to the local people at the flea markets and so on. This is Canadian product; they'll be proud to put that label on it. We as a party have never supported labelling based on cost rather than content. We see that as backwards and we want to flip that around so that what you buy is based on the content of that packaging, not on the cost.

HM: Thank you. Wayne Easter.

WE: Thank you Chair and thank you Garnet for your question. It is indeed an important question because I think Canadians really want to buy Canadian product. But they need to know that they're buying a Canadian product. And we could have got to what Garnet is asking us to do as government if the Standing Committee in Agriculture and AgriFood would have been listened to. We held hearings. We knew that this was an issue. But even about two weeks before the report that comes down, what does the Prime Minister do because he puts politics over reason; he puts politics over leadership. And it's all about messaging when it comes to Stephen Harper. And so he went with the proposal that Minister Ritz talked about. We need to go much further than that. We need to insure that when it says Product of Canada it is the contents of the package that is product of Canada. That consumers can't be confused by other names such as Canada Fancy. And the Liberal Party on this point will put 30 million dollars toward a program for the promotion of local farmers markets, the branding of Canadian growing foods, and the marketing because that's an important part. Canadians need to understand what they're buying when they see a label. And the government of Canada has a responsibility to farmers to ensure that that marketing is done. So that on farmers behalf, consumers are buying Canadian product with the assurance from the government of Canada that it is indeed a Canadian product. That's where the Standing Committee wanted to go; that's where we're going. We were undercut by Stephen Harper because he put politics first.

HM: Thank you and for the last presentation, Kate Storey.

KS: Canada's reputation for quality has always been our competitive edge in the global economy. Canadian farmers are proud of their work and have the right to have food ingredients identified. We need to maintain consumer confidence and that means transparent labelling that includes labelling of genetically engineered ingredients. As farmers we cannot control consumer choice. Canadians and across the world cause consumers don't trust genetically engineered foods. And the customer is always right. The Green Party believes in honest, complete, and accurate labelling. Farmers are also slowly realizing that they should reconsider their dependence on genetic engineering. The biggest issue to me is the loss of the farmer's right to save

their own seed. Perhaps the Liberal and Conservative candidates would like to tell us why they are pushing us toward a day when all food production is owned by a foreign seed company and hiding that fact behind misleading labelling. Already this spring, farmers in my area were unable to source seed and hadn't saved none of their own. A secure, stable food supply depends on a variety of seed sources and genetics.

The Green Party believes that farmers have the right to save seed, we support the independent family farm, and we support consumer demand for accurate, truthful, complete labelling, and discourage the use of genetically engineered products. We are proud of the Canada brand and want to ensure that Canada retains its reputation for quality, healthy products.

HM: Thank you. So for our last debate segment on the questioning of labelling rules and a national communications program. To start off, Tony Martin.

TM: Well, I think it's absolutely essential in this instance and to address this question and the question that was raised before we started, to raise the profile of agriculture and farming across this country. I mean, Ron Bonnett, the Vice-President of the CFA who has a farm in my riding made a very profound statement a few months ago in the media. He said you can drive by a big industrial plant in a town like Sault Ste. Marie - the steel plant and you know immediately the impact of that industry on the economy of our region. You can drive by 25 farms and not have a clue. You know that is really sad. We need to as a government partner, as I've said over and over here today, with our farmers to raise the profile, to make the connections farmer to consumer so that when people go out to look for a product that's healthy and they want a guarantee that it's going to be safe, they will know. They will know the farmer, they will know the farmer's practices, and they will be confident that that food will be good for themselves and for kids. But they can't do it by themselves. Farmers are strapped as I said earlier. The cost of inputs is going up like crazy whether its fertilizer or energy. They need government there at the table with programs supporting them to raise the profile of this wonderful industry across this land so that we can all be assured that our food will be safe and they are at a reasonable price when we need it. Thank you very much.

WE: Garnet I think, Garnet made the point and that is that the regulatory changes that have been done by the government do not meet the test of really getting to defining what is a Canadian product. And as I said in the beginning, that is the tenor of this government. It's messaging rather than substance. And what we want is action that really counts whether it's on Product of Canada labelling; whether it's on safety nets; whether it's on AgriFlex; whether it's on supply management and orderly marketing. We actually want action that counts and we're not seeing that from this government and this as Garnet himself has indicated, this is messaging by the government but not really dealing with the issue. We want a government

that takes strong leadership and provides the action to do the job on the ground so that farmers can prosper and Canadian consumers have the choice of actually knowing when they're buying Canadian product.

HM: And from the government what's the message.

GR: Thank you Hugh. Of course I agree with Garnet, there is a huge educational component that's missing between consumers and producers at this point. You know when I went to school a lot of years ago, we use to take this type of thing in health class and so forth. You know we learned about this type of thing. It doesn't seem to be there anymore. There is getting to be a growing connection with fairs and exhibitions and I'm happy to fund a lot of those more. The 4-H movement out there is doing a great job of connecting urban and rural situations but we still have that disconnect. You know there's a lot of people out there that thinks milk comes off the shelf in Safeway, they don't realize the work and energy that goes into putting it there. Same with a loaf of bread. They don't realize that it's pennies on a loaf of bread that actually goes to producers and we have to make sure that that message gets out there.

I also want to quote Wayne again as we finish here. He talked about the standing committee last spring and how he jumped ahead of them. But listen to this. We knew long ago that this measure would improve and could improve farm incomes and provide valuable information to consumers. But like so many other issues, they just didn't get it done.

HM: Kate Storey.

WE: I would say we did and you didn't Gerry but anyway.

KS: How did we get into a situation where we can't trust our labels, we don't know what's in the food. You guys have had long enough fooling around with this. We need a fresh perspective. We need a government who is willing to listen to the people. Thank you.

HM: Thank you. You know what, we've got 45 seconds.

WE: Okay.

HM: We shouldn't have said that, eh?

WE: I would just like to thank the Canadian Federation of Agriculture for putting on the debate. I believe this election is much bigger than agriculture. We need to do what we need to do and that in that area but do we want our Canada back and Stephen Harper is taking this country in the wrong direction. I believe it firmly, we need to make changes.

HM: Fifteen seconds each.

TM: Well just we need more New Democrats in Parliament. This is the first chance I think ever for Canadians to elect a New Democrat government in Ottawa. Let's take advantage of that. Real change the change that we need, an agenda, and a platform that's hopeful, that is in support of the farm families and rural communities and cities and a government that has been accountable and responsible over the years wherever they've been elected.

HM: Kate Storey, 15 seconds.

KS: It's our turn now. The world is turning green, vote green.

HM: Minister Ritz, 15 seconds.

GR: Thank you Hugh and thank you to Ron for putting this on. I really do appreciate it. And thank you to all of you for showing an interest in Canadian agriculture, in the dilemma that producers find themselves in every day. As you go to the polls this fall, take a look at what has actually happened in the last two years and vote based on what's been done, not what's been said. Thank you.

HM: Thank you very much to all the four participants – Kate Storey, Minister Gerry Ritz, Wayne Easter, and Tony Martin for coming here today and spending this time. Also to CPAC for putting it on air and CFA and a little bit from CFWF for helping to organize it. And of course merci des participants ici aujourd'hui. And to go back to my comment to 25 years ago, we couldn't have got any interest in agricultural debate and it just shows you how things have evolved and how much the consumers are very much interested in the subject of food. And it's important that this be covered in the way that it has. Thank you.

Jon Steinman: And this is Deconstructing Dinner. That concludes today's episode featuring recordings from the September 29th agriculture debate held in Ottawa and hosted by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. You can check out the full two-hour televised debate by linking to it from the Deconstructing Dinner website at deconstructingdinner.ca. And a thanks to CPAC, the Cable Public Affairs Channel for broadcasting the debate.

ending theme

JS: 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.

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

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