

We don't need more health care... ***... we need more (Perma) health !***

By: Claude William Genest - Green Party Candidate for Ver(t)dun and Permaculture Designer

When it comes to traditional knowledge and its application to our current situation, I can hardly think of a better source than good ol' Grandma - She was right : an ounce of prevention really is worth a pound of cure.

Our Western medical model of treating disease is the best ever devised for dealing with emergency, trauma and sickness. Good thing, given skyrocketing rates of degenerative disease.

Medical treatment is unfortunately a profitable growth industry, and huge multinational pharmaceutical and healthcare companies wait impatiently to service Canada's "need" for privatized medicine.

We've forgotten Grandma's wisdom: Health care doesn't begin at the hospital !

Preventive medicine starts in the soil. The equation is simple - healthy food equals healthy people. Doctors take the Hippocratic oath, yet stubbornly ignore the prophetic words etched on his tombstone:

"Let your food be your medicine, and your medicine be your food".

Economically, grandma's wisdom is equally applicable, a dollar of prevention is worth many, many dollars of cure.

The question then, is why do governments worldwide pursue policies that simultaneously make us sick and cost us money ?

The "Life Sciences" Corporations

Unknown by most and under-reported by the media is the fact pharmaceutical companies and agri-business have merged to create the "Life Sciences" companies that today dominate food and medicine on a global scale.

From the perspective of a profit driven CEO, it's the business plan of the century: Sell them the stuff that makes them sick, and then the stuff that makes them well ! Worse, we are subsidizing this folly on several levels :

- You and I are paying the highest taxes in North America to subsidize toxic industrial agriculture that hemorrhages top soil, chokes waterways, fouls the air, decimates communities and poisons all living things.
- We pay to finance and maintain the roads, bridges and ports that allow these

multinationals, (who remember pay virtually no tax themselves), to transport their “bads and disservices”.

- Then we fund soil conservation agencies and restoration projects to clean up and mitigate the mess. (And that’s after paying regulatory agencies to monitor that pollution is done within “acceptable” limits).
- Finally we pay again in the form of ever increasing Medicare costs for degenerative diseases that are overwhelmingly the result of environmental factors and NOT genetic “bad luck” - Turns out we really are what we eat !

If you feel your ire rise and blood boil in reading this, fear not, we can always raise taxes and get you some blood pressure pills for “free” !

Myth Exposed

In response to these disturbing, costly and altogether unsustainable realities, our leaders insist that industrial agriculture is the only way for farmers to stay competitive. “Get Big, or get out” is the mantra. Economies of scale and mass production, we’re continually told, are the order of the day.

The time has come to expose this fallacy for good.

Given the associated environmental and health costs, the notion that industrial agriculture is cheap, is clearly a hollow myth.

Indeed, it is a dismal failure even by the skewed accounting of conventional economists in that it violates their most basic tenet - the law of supply and demand.

Where is the logic in pumping out ever more of the very commodities that glut the market, and continue to drive prices ever downward ? Clearly this is of no benefit to the farmer who in many cases sees costs of production exceed revenue.

No, the only winner here is agri-business who, vertically integrated from seed to shelf, makes its money retailing processed, packaged and especially shipped goods.

Gandhi was right : “We don’t need mass production, but production by the masses”.

Support your local Farmacy !

Is there a solution ? Yes ! and on top of being embarrassingly simple, it’s enormously beneficial : By shifting subsidies to support local organic agriculture, at the individual, municipal and provincial levels, we could create more employment, healthy foods, healthy communities and a healthy environment while lowering health care and infrastructure costs.

And given that, here in Quebec we import nearly 90 % of our food, a readily available and completely unrecognized market awaits : Us....

Isn't that the kind of health care we really need ?

- 30 -

Claude runs Green Mountain Permaculture on the shore of Lake Champlain in Northern Vermont - He will co-teach the Introduction to PC Fundamentals with Peter Bane, Sept. 12-20/03

Visit **www.greenmountainpermaculture.com** for more info.