

FRUIT	Co-op closure leaves growers in the lurch	7
POLITICS	Ag advisory committee in jeopardy	13
CO-OPS	Gulf Island entrepreneurs eye food security	31



TerraLink
 Seed
 Plant Nutrition
 Crop Protection
 Supplies
 Service
www.tlhort.com
 1-800-661-4559
 Rooted in your community® since 1973 TerraLink

COUNTRY LIFE IN BC

The agricultural news source in British Columbia since 1915 SEPTEMBER 2024 | Vol. 110 No. 9



Bottom of the bin

The bins are empty at BC Tree Fruits Co-operative, the Okanagan's largest packinghouse with a history stretching back to the Dirty '30s. A new round of financial pressures prompted the co-op to shut its doors July 26, leaving growers scrambling to find homes for their fruit. The roots of the troubles run deep, as several stories in this issue explain. | MYRNA STARK LEADER

BC Tree Fruits for sale

Debts force closure

PETER MITHAM

KELOWNA – BC Tree Fruits Co-op will be sold as part of a restructuring process overseen by the courts.

"The Petitioners intend to ... commence a sale and investment solicitation process ("SISP") that leads to a transaction which will provide for the full repayment to CIBC of amounts owing ... and to allow the Petitioners to emerge as a better capitalized operation," interim CEO and chief financial officer Doug Pankiw said in documents supporting an August 12 application to BC Supreme Court for protection from creditors under the Companies' Creditors

Grower dissatisfaction ►

DELTA WATERTEC
SAVE NOW, PAY LATER!
 ON ALL IN-STOCK HOSE REELS
 No Payments & No Interest for 6 Months
 Contact Us to Learn More!
 1-888-675-7999
 watertecna.com

Creditors a cross-section of industry

PETER MITHAM

KELOWNA – Those owed money by BC Tree Fruits Co-op and Growers Supply Co. represent a cross-section of the orchard industry, revealing the depth of the co-op's economic impact.

Beyond CIBC, Fillmore Construction Management Inc. and the nine other secured creditors who come first in priority for repayment, the co-op owes \$4.8 million to 289 growers.

Virtually all orchards supplying the co-op are

impacted, and the majority are small producers.

The co-op's 10 largest debts to growers account for less than \$1.5 million, leaving \$3.3 million in debts under \$100,000. Fifty growers are owed amounts between \$20,000 and \$100,000, totalling an aggregate of nearly \$2.1 million.

But a whopping 190 growers – two-thirds of farms – are owed less than \$10,000, including well-known names such as Jealous Fruits and the Geens, David and Melissa Dobernigg and Hank

Markgraf.

There are also 82 suppliers among the unsecured creditors.

The largest is packaging supplier Crown Corrugated Co. (\$272,706) and trucking company AMS Ventures Ltd. (\$159,964).

Growers Supply Co. owes \$5.8 million to 114 entities, including the co-op.

NM Bartlett, a provider of crop protection products, is Growers Supply's largest creditor, at \$2.7 million, followed by BC Tree Fruits at \$385,369.

POSTES CANADA
 Port payé Post-Publications
 40012122
 CANADA POST
 Postage paid
 Publications Mail
 40012122
 Vol. 110 No. 9
 Country Life in BC
 36 Dale Road
 Enderby, BC V0E 1V4
 Postmaster, Please return Undeliverable labels to: