

[Kredl's Corner Market needs miracle to avoid bankruptcy](#)

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HAMPTON * Kredl's Corner Market's owner is hoping for a Hail Mary pass to save his business this week.

Dave Wolpin says the market will be forced into bankruptcy Friday morning and he will have to close the store that employs more than 70 people during the holiday season unless he can buy more time or find an investor.

Kredl's Corner Market has a hearing to cancel the creditor proposal from Farm Credit Canada, which will result in bankruptcy on Friday in Court of Queen's Bench in Saint John.

For decades, Kredl's has been a hub for local farm products and grew to sell 60+ flavours of ice cream, fresh in-store baking, and boasts a big nursery and cookhouse. Wolpin's focus has been on supporting local and organic farming.

The business, which had a major expansion in the last few years, is one of the town's biggest employers and served as a point of sale for many local farmers.

Wolpin said it is that expansion that created the issue. He admits he grew too big too fast and the biggest cause of the \$2.7-million debt the company has has been related to the mortgage.

"We are a profitable company. That is what is so frustrating. We can pay our bills. We pay our staff," he said. "We aren't asking for a present, just time to make this work."

The Hampton business first filed documents in January with the Office of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy Canada. Earlier this fall he said he had a potential investor show interest but that fell through.

Wolpin is critical of the provincial government's OpportunitiesNB and Farm Credit Canada which he sought help from to save the company.

He said OpportunitiesNB backed out of giving the company a repayable loan that would have kept him in business. He is still hoping the province reconsiders before it is too late.

"Once again, New Brunswick is choosing defeat from the jaws of victory," Wolpin said in a press release. "Once again, a New Brunswick entrepreneur, committed to the province, is being left high and dry by both levels of government - after both promised to help find the solution to the company's business future."

"We just want the province to make a decision that will help a New Brunswick investor who wants to invest in New Brunswick and has invested in New Brunswick."

Opportunities NB CEO Stephen Lund said he wished to clarify that the Crown Corporation had only agreed to review his proposal, but ultimately chose to go no further.

“It is unfortunate to see any company struggle,” Lund said. “...We assist more than 300 companies, this is what we do. But we must make due diligence is selecting the businesses we assist and support the ones with a reasonable chance for success. Because we are dealing with taxpayers’ money.”

Wolpin said after successfully going through a re-organization to ensure its ongoing profitability and sustainability, Farm Credit Canada had accepted a proposal from Kredl’s to ensure it received the maximum return on its investment. But he said if the bankruptcy takes place it means a lesser return on taxpayer investment.

“This province will chase companies from outside with grants of more than \$10,000 per job. I am not looking for a handout, Kredl’s is looking for a repayable loan - as I was promised - to make Christmas bright for the families of our employees and our local community,” said Wolpin. “But Premier Gallant, Minister Landry and others in the province have been absent and unwilling to help by simply living up to a commitment they made to Kredl’s in early October.”

He said that commitment, made to Farm Credit Canada and to Kredl’s, was for financing to help repay Farm Credit and to finalize the restructuring.

Trevor Sutter, a spokesperson for Farm Credit Canada, said he could not speak to matters with specific clients.

However, court documents filed state after a year of working with Wolpin on proposals and investors falling through, the FCC no longer believed Kredl’s would have success in coming up with the funds to repay the loan and decided to realize the collateral.

“It has been frustrating to be an entrepreneur in New Brunswick, watching the province say one thing and do the opposite,” said Wolpin. “I feel terribly for the families of those who will be losing their jobs this week - a preventable outcome that simply required leadership and the understanding that, in New Brunswick, we keep our commitments.”

He said the hardest part knowing what it could mean for all his employees this time of year.

Garden centre manager Amber Webster has been working for Kredl’s since 2004 but her history with the place goes back even further. Her family farm brought produce to the market when it opened in 1980.

“It is so frustrating and I get emotional talking about it,” she said. “But I am staying hopeful that Dave will find an investor and that this is just a temporary thing.”

The market was a bustle of people Tuesday, even after the announcement. Regular shopper Pete Wilson said the news was hard to swallow.

“I am devastated. I shop here everyday for my vegetables,” he said. “People seem to think things are cheaper at the grocery store but Kredl’s has stayed competitive and cares about being local and organic.”

Webster said it will also be hard on suppliers.

“I come from a family farm that couldn’t make it and I see that he is trying to support and help grow family farms,” she said,

She said she and the rest of the staff believe strongly in what they are doing and says they feel they are helping people eat better on a day-to-day basis with the local food offerings. She said that vision has been thanks to Wolpin and she hopes investors will recognize that too.

“He has potential oozing out his ears and he’s just hit a bump in the road. People need to see that he can come through this and support him. Because when he does come through this, he is the type of person that will revolutionize the food industry.”

According to an email from Kredl’s early Tuesday evening, a group of the business’s supporters, including the National Farmers Union, will be travelling to Fredericton on Wednesday morning in hopes of meeting with Premier Brian Gallant to see if the store’s closure can be avoided.

Wolpin purchased the business in 2011 after working in the business for 12 years. Kredl’s began an 8,000 square foot expansion late in 2013. In an interview earlier this year he said he admits he likely grew the business too fast, but has since been able to restructure and begin making profits.

Wolpin has focused on agricultural sustainability through his business. In 2015, he was one of 16 entrepreneurs selected from a pool of 446 to join the Entrepreneurial Leaders Program at University of New Brunswick’s Wallace McCain Institute. The program is for those who are deemed to have the highest growth potential entrepreneurs in the Atlantic region.