

## [About](#)

Find more about  
[Media Room](#)

## News Release

# BCSC orders \$1.1 million in financial sanctions for hops farm fraud and illegal distribution

Date:  
2024-01-26

Number:  
2024/007

*Vancouver* – The B.C. Securities Commission (BCSC) [has ordered](#) \$1.1 million in financial sanctions and issued market bans for fraud and illegal distribution committed in connection to a Fraser Valley hops farming company.

Fraser Valley Hop Farms Inc. (FVHF) and its sole named director, Alexander William Bridges, also known as Alex Blackwell, must pay a combined \$498,273 to the BCSC, representing the amount they obtained as a result of their wrongdoing. Bridges must also pay an administrative penalty of \$550,000 for his misconduct.

Investors had been told that the funds would be used for operating expenses on a 125-acre farm to grow hops for the craft brewing industry. FVHF and Bridges – who controlled the company’s bank account, solicited investors and decided what to do with their money – committed fraud when they spent nearly \$500,000 of investor funds on expenses with no “potential legitimate use,” including personal use.

“We would characterize the fraud committed by FVHF and Bridges as being near to the most serious type of fraud possible in an investment context,” the panel said.

FVHF, Bridges and the company’s marketing director, Shane Douglas Harder-Toews, also illegally distributed securities to investors when they sold shares without a prospectus – a formal document providing details of an investment.

By ignoring the requirements to provide investors with a prospectus, the panel said, “investors are subjected to undisclosed risks and the public can lose trust in the integrity of capital markets.”

In addition to the financial sanctions, the panel permanently prohibited Bridges from participating in B.C.’s investment market, except as an investor. The panel justified the ban because of the “continuing risk [he] poses to the public and his lack of fitness to be a registrant.” FVHF is likewise permanently prohibited from trading its shares or engaging in any promotional activity.

For his misconduct, Toews – who was found by the panel to be a *de facto* FVHF director – must pay an administrative penalty of \$50,000 and is temporarily banned from participating in the public markets for six years.

In issuing the sanctions, the panel acknowledged that the misconduct has “resulted in significant financial and emotional harm to investors.” Several investors testified about how the loss of money affected them, including one who was no longer able to afford a down payment on a home. Others testified about the psychological impact and how it eroded their

ability to trust others.

FVHF is in danger of being dissolved, the panel said, and there is no evidence indicating any potential avenue for recovery by investors.

Although the BCSC provided Bridges, Toews and FVHF with an opportunity to be heard, they did not participate.

### **About the B.C. Securities Commission ([www.bcsc.bc.ca](http://www.bcsc.bc.ca))**

The B.C. Securities Commission is the independent provincial government agency responsible for regulating capital markets in British Columbia through the administration of the Securities Act. Our mission is to protect and promote the public interest by fostering:

- A securities market that is fair and warrants public confidence
- A dynamic and competitive securities industry that provides investment opportunities and access to capital.

Media Contact:

Elise Palmer  
604-899-6830

Public inquiries:

604-899-6854 or 1-800-373-6393 (toll free)  
[inquiries@bcsc.bc.ca](mailto:inquiries@bcsc.bc.ca)

Learn how to protect yourself and become a more informed investor at [www.investright.org](http://www.investright.org)

[About](#)   [Who We Are](#)   [What We Do](#)   [News & Events](#)   [Careers](#)   [Contact Us](#)

Subscribe to our updates



Reception: 604-899-6500  
Contact Centre: 604-899-6854 or  
1-800-373-6393  
Fax: 604-899-6506

701 West Georgia Street  
P.O. Box 10142, Pacific Centre  
Vancouver, BC V7Y 1L2

