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Engineer faces hearing over Canadian bridge that collapsed hours after opening

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A Canadian engineer will face a disciplinary hearing this month after a bridge he designed collapse hours after opening.

The five-day hearing in front of a panel of the Discipline Committee of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan (APEGGS) will begin on 6 June.

The panel will look into allegations that engineer Scott Gullacher's work on the Dyck Memorial Bridge in Saskatchewan, Western Canada, was sub-standard.

The bridge opened on 14 September 2018 but collapsed later that day. No one was injured.

Allegations to be considered by the panel include that Gullacher failed to practise "in a careful diligent manner" when determining the resistance required of the piles, in their design and in the design of the overall bridge.

The panel will also consider allegations that Gullacher was offering services in an area outside of his professional competence, and that he failed to be "careful and diligent" in his design of five other bridges in other parts of Canada.

If the panel finds Gullacher's actions to be "professional misconduct or professional incompetence", he could be expelled from the association and struck from the register, suspended from the association, restricted to practice only under certain conditions, reprimanded or penalised in "any other way that the panel considers just".

The panel may also impose a fine of up to \$15,000 (£9,400).

In addition to this hearing, the Rural Municipality (RM) of Clayton has brought a lawsuit against the companies run by Gullacher and his wife - bridge construction firm Can-Struct Systems and engineering services company Inertia Solutions.

The RM is seeking damages for the cost of repairing and replacing the bridge, and for the loss of use.

According to the RM, Gullacher and his companies breached their contract because the bridge has lasted for 75 years, but it collapsed after a few hours. The lawsuit emphasises that Gullacher agreed "to design and/or construct a bridge that would not immediately collapse".

In addition, a geotechnical investigation of the river bed had not been undertaken before installing the bridge's pilings. The lawsuit says that "no geotechnical report was prepared to determine the subsurface conditions under the bridge" and "Can-Struct's bridge design called for the use of steel piles as opposed to the industry-standard driven piles".

However Gullacher and Inertia Solutions said the lack of geotechnical investigation for the collapsed bridge was at the request of the RM.

"The RM provided the instruction that no geotechnical investigation should be obtained as the RM was concerned about the additional cost and delay," they said. "Inertia Solutions admits that a part of the bridge collapsed but denies that its design or specifications caused the collapse and puts the plaintiff to strict proof thereof."

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