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Recent Disciplinary Hearing Strong Reminder of the Need for Sound Engineering and Construction Standards

On September 14, 2018, just hours after opening, a bridge collapsed in one of Saskatchewan's rural municipalities (RMs). Though no injuries occurred, the event garnered wide media attention. On June 6, 2022, the engineer responsible for the construction of the collapsed bridge, and other bridges in the province, was the subject of a hearing conducted by the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan (APEGS). The hearing reviewed several formal complaints related to the collapsed bridge.¹ "SARM and the public await the release of the official judgement of the hearing," says SARM President Ray Orb.

There are 1300+ bridges in Saskatchewan's RMs. Most of these were constructed between 1960 and 1980 and are coming to the end of their life span. Under *The Municipalities Act*, RMs are responsible for the upkeep and, where necessary, the replacement of the bridges in their jurisdiction. "The maintenance of so many bridges at the end of their life places strain on the financial resources of rural municipalities," says President Orb.

SARM administers the Rural Integrated Roads for Growth (RIRG) program, which is funded by the Government of Saskatchewan's Ministry of Highways and managed by a Program Management Board made up of SARM and Ministry of Highways officials. The construction of bridges and large culverts are a central pillar of this program. Through this program, bridge projects undertaken by RMs may be eligible for up to \$500,000 of funding in a cost-sharing arrangement.

Bridges built through the RIRG program require RMs to use professional engineering, a fair and transparent tendering process, and to follow sound construction standards that ensure public safety. SARM also employs two municipal bridge engineers who support RMs in their bridge construction projects through the RIRG program. Over the past five years, \$47 million of funding has been distributed to RMs for over 130 bridge and large diameter culvert projects that meet the standards for public safety in the province.

President Orb says, "SARM remains committed to advocating for and administering programs that support rural municipalities to safely construct and maintain the bridges under their jurisdiction. Ensuring minimum engineering requirements and construction standards are met for rural infrastructure projects is critical for the safety of us all."

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Background: SARM is the voice of Saskatchewan rural municipalities, and we are committed to working with our members and partners to build a safe, efficient, and effective infrastructure that serves the needs of the people of rural Saskatchewan.

¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/sask-bridge-engineer-1.6479162> see also, <https://www.apegs.ca/assets/notice-of-hearing-june-6-2022.pdf>