

Highlights from Critical Report on Ontario Mall Collapse



On June 23, 2012, part of the rooftop parking deck at the Algo Centre Mall in Elliot Lake, Ontario collapsed, killing two women and injuring 19 others. The Elliot Lake Inquiry recently released its report into the collapse. The report is divided into two parts: the events leading to the collapse and the emergency response. An executive summary is also available.

Here are the highlights from the very critical report, focusing on those related to the owners of the Mall.

In the most basic sense, the collapse was caused by severe corrosion of the steel substructure below the parking deck from rust. The warnings signs of this damage included many complaints over the years about the leaking decks and falling pieces of the ceiling.

In response to these complaints, Mall owners either chose cheap and ineffective repairs or opted to sell the Mall when faced with significant repair bills. The inquiry found that the owners opted for the narrowest of interpretations of engineering reports, always choosing patchwork or cosmetic solutions.

For example, instead of installing a full waterproofing membrane, the owners chose to continually patch and seal the cracks' despite the obvious fact that the repairs weren't working.

In addition, owners actively concealed their knowledge of the parking deck's condition from the city and subsequent buyers. In fact, the last owner (Eastwood Mall Inc.) 'actively misrepresented the repair work it engaged in and resorted to subterfuge and falsehood' to mislead authorities, tenants and the public, says the report.

The report is also highly critical of the city, engineers and the MOL. (Criminal negligence charges have been laid against a professional engineer as to the collapse.)

Bottom line: The report says the 'real story behind the collapse is one of human, not material, failure' Some of these failings were minor; some were not. They ranged from apathy, neglect, and indifference through mediocrity,

ineptitude, and incompetence to outright greed, obfuscation, and duplicity. Occasional voices of alarm blew on deaf and callous ears. Warning signs went unseen by eyes likely averted for fear of jeopardizing the continuing existence of the Mall.?