

## 06-07-2005 Canada – James Radcliffe – FF Boat Training Accident

### James Ratcliffe - 06-07-2005 - Hudson, Quebec

When 20 year old James Ratcliffe, died Monday evening, he was nowhere near a burning building. On Lake of Two Mountains, with three other firefighters, Ratcliffe was conducting a standard water-rescue training session when he was ejected from the fire department's Zodiac boat and hit his head on its motor. His was the first fatality in the history of the Hudson fire department. James Ratcliffe and two other volunteer firefighters from Hudson were taking an introductory training session on driving a water rescue boat.



#### Quebec firefighter, 22, drowns during training

<http://www.cbc.ca/story/canada/national/2005/06/07/quebec-firefighter050607.html>

07 Jun 2005 CBC News

Police are investigating the death of a young firefighter from Hudson, Que., who drowned in a boating accident during a training exercise Monday night.

Officers from the Sûreté du Québec were called to Lac des Deux Montagnes, 35 kilometres west of Montreal, just before 9 p.m. Monday.

Police say four firefighters were taking part in the exercise when one was thrown from the boat.

The 22-year-old victim may have hit his head on the side of the boat as he fell into the water, said police spokesman Jayson Gauthier. "The firefighters rapidly came to his rescue and then he was transported to the Lakeshore Hospital where, through the night, the individual was declared deceased," Gauthier said.

Investigators with the Sûreté du Québec and the provincial Workplace Health and Safety Board are investigating.

#### Quebec firefighter, 20, drowns during training

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2005/06/07/quebec-firefighter050607.html>

June 7, 2005 [CBC News](#)

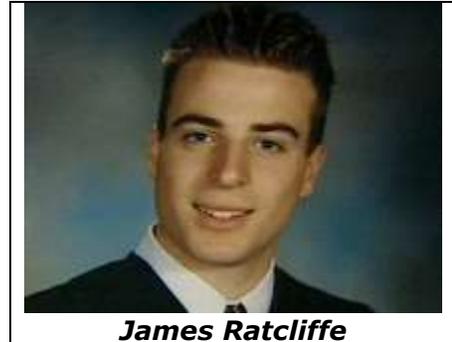
Police are investigating the death of a volunteer young firefighter from Hudson, Que., who drowned during a training exercise Monday night.

Officers from the Sûreté du Québec were called to Lac des Deux Montagnes, 35 kilometres west of Montreal, just before 9 p.m. Monday.

Police say four firefighters were taking part in the exercise when 20-year-old James Ratcliffe was thrown from their boat. Ratcliffe may have hit his head on the side of the boat as he fell into the water, said police spokesman Jayson Gauthier.

The other three firefighters rescued him, but he was declared dead overnight at Lakeshore Hospital.

Investigators with the Sûreté du Québec and the provincial Workplace Health and Safety Board are investigating.



**James Ratcliffe**

On Tuesday, mourners placed flowers and cards on the windshield of a yellow hatchback parked in front of Hudson's fire station.

The car belonged to Ratcliffe, a straight-A University of Ottawa arts student who had just started his third year as a volunteer firefighter in the borough about 60 kilometres west of Montreal.

"James was a great kid," said his father, Peter Ratcliffe. "He died doing what he loved, surrounded by the people he loved."

## **HUDSON FIREFIGHTER DIED WHILE FULFILLING HIS DREAM**

[HTTP://WWW.FIREFIGHTERCLOSECALLS.COM/FULLSTORY.PHP?18405](http://www.firefighterclosecalls.com/fullstory.php?18405)

**June 8, 2005**

James Ratcliffe volunteered for the force to help people and give back to community MONIQUE BEAUDIN The Gazette James Ratcliffe dreamed of being a firefighter with the town of Hudson's volunteer force because he wanted to help people and give something back to his community, his father said yesterday. And, Peter Ratcliffe recalled with a sad smile, because "girls think firefighters are hot."

When he joined the force 20 months ago, Ratcliffe's mother, Diane, joked that he could be a firefighter as long as he didn't run into any burning buildings. When Ratcliffe, 20, died Monday evening, he was nowhere near a burning building. On Lake of Two Mountains, with three other firefighters, Ratcliffe was conducting a standard water-rescue training session when he fell from the fire department's Zodiac boat and hit his head on its motor.

His was the first fatality in the history of the Hudson fire department. "He died a hero," his father told The Gazette yesterday. "Being a firefighter was

his dream job." People in Hudson were reeling from the news of Ratcliffe's death yesterday.

The flag at the town hall flew at half staff. Firefighters hugged townspeople in the shade of the fire station. Activities at the Hudson Yacht Club, where Ratcliffe had recently been appointed bar manager, were cancelled for the week. Firefighters attended counselling sessions, and last night, a psychologist was to hold a session for Ratcliffe's many friends.

At his parents' two-storey yellow clapboard house, a short walk from the fire station, Ratcliffe's friends and co-workers gathered in the driveway beside the yellow car his parents bought him when he won a coveted academic scholarship. Others hugged his father, crying and offering condolences. The town's firefighters visited Ratcliffe's family yesterday afternoon to pay their respects. "His greatest strengths were his morals and ethics - he had very high standards," Peter Ratcliffe said. "Whatever he did, he did well."

James Ratcliffe joined the fire department while studying at John Abbott College. He had recently returned to Hudson for the summer after finishing his first year of studies at the University of Ottawa. His father said he was trying to decide whether to go into law or medicine. "If there is a word that went beyond 'excellent,' that would be James," Fire Chief Peter Milot said yesterday, fighting tears. "We've lost one of our team members of very high calibre.

Everyone right now is hurting quite a bit, but with him on our team spiritually, we're going to overcome this." Ratcliffe attended elementary and secondary school in Hudson, winning a scholarship from the Avon Canada cosmetics company when he graduated in 2002. He was one of four West Island students to win the prize, chosen for his above-90-per-cent average during five years of high school, and his extracurricular activities, which included student council and leadership camps. "He was the greatest guy, very selfless," his friend Adam Meier said yesterday. He said Ratcliffe told him he was considering pursuing firefighting as a career. "Firefighting meant the world to him," said Meier, 20. "We used to bug him about it when he'd wear his beeper to the bar." Ratcliffe spent his summers working at the yacht club, where he went from busboy to bar manager in seven years, manager Trevor Collins said. On Monday, he spent the morning working with



**CREDIT: DAVE SIDAWAY, THE GAZETTE Friends and neighbours mourn the death of volunteer firefighter James Ratcliffe, 20, who was killed Monday evening when he fell from a boat during a training exercise.**

other firefighters in the village, and that evening was out on the lake, training two rookie firefighters on the boat he had helped raise money to buy in 2003. "He died surrounded by the people he loved to work with and doing the work he adored," Milot said.

The coroner's office and the provincial workers safety board are investigating Ratcliffe's death, which the Surete du Quebec said was accidental. Ratcliffe is survived by his parents, Peter and Diane, and his 23-year-old sister, Jessica. Funeral arrangements had not been confirmed yesterday, although Hudson Mayor Elizabeth Corker said a visitation for Ratcliffe would be held in the town's community centre.

## **Firefighter James Peter Ratcliffe - Hudson loses a son!** <http://www.newswire.ca/en/releases/archive/June2005/10/c0689.html> **June 10, 2005**

HUDSON, June 10 /CNW Telbec/ - On Saturday morning, at 11:00 a.m., at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Hudson there will be held a memorial service in honour of firefighter James Peter Ratcliffe, died in the line of duty, last Monday evening. At the time of the accident, the 20 year old young volunteer firefighter was participating in a water rescue training session, on the Lake of Two Mountains, accompanied by three other colleagues of the Hudson Fire Department.

Firefighter Ratcliffe and his colleagues were performing their third nautical exercise this year. Monday evening, at approximately 7:30 p.m., they left in tumultuous waters in the direction of the Ile aux Tourtes Bridge. The group of four firefighters was under the command of a Lieutenant who was manoeuvring the rigid hull inflatable emergency rescue boat, powered by a 90 HP motor. Firefighter Ratcliffe was second in command to the training officer who was teaching the stabilization methods and the procedure on how to turn the craft in order to safely approach the victims. Wearing their full Mustang suits and Dave Clark headsets, the firefighters were training for approximately 45 minutes when, while executing the manoeuvres, James Ratcliffe fell overboard and suffered a violent trauma which resulted in his death.

### **Courage, dedication and humour**

The 5000 residents of the small Town of Hudson have been in a state of shock ever since. James Peter Ratcliffe was the son of Peter and Diane Ratcliffe and Jessica's younger brother, a family that is very appreciated in this close-knit community. Mayor Elizabeth Corker, for that matter, states "It is like losing a son".

As well as being a sportsman, James was recognized as a very talented young man. Last year, he was awarded the Avon University Scholarship. He had just completed his first year in psychology at the University of Ottawa.

The Chief of the Hudson Fire Department, Mr. Peter Milot, cannot praise this young man enough: "James was passionate in all of his endeavours. He invested 150% of his energy. He was at the beginning of his third year as a volunteer firefighter and was respected by the other 26 firefighters and officers of the Department. He possessed a tremendous sense of responsibility and devotion. Mischievous, timid, he had great sense of humour and a marvellous quality, the ability to touch someone with his words. His departure will create a great void".

## **IN THE HOUSE ~ Speaking on my Private Member's Motion - M-153 -seeking full recognition for Canadian firefighters**

<http://www.peterjulian.ca/page/259>

Mon 13 Jun 2005. **38TH PARLIAMENT, 1ST SESSION**

### **Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved:**

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should: (a) recognize all firefighters who have fallen in the line of duty in Canada; (b) support the proposed Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation mandate for the construction of a monument in the Parliamentary precinct containing the names of all Canadian firefighters who have died in the line of duty; and (c) send a message to the Senate acquainting the Upper House of the decision of this House.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is with great honour to speak today to my private member's motion, Motion No. 153, which pays tribute to the sacrifice, dedication and heroism of firefighters and public safety officers who put their lives on the line so that our families, our children and our communities can live in a safer, more humane world.

Canada has not always been fair to its firefighters who had to fight tooth and nail for every bit of improvement, in addition to fighting fires and saving lives. Over 800 have died since before Confederation. Where is the monument for their sacrifice? Where is the support for their families? Motion No 153 and my proposed amendment would help ensure recognition and financial security for the families of firefighters when their loved one is killed or disabled in the line of duty. Motion No. 153 is not my motion. It belongs to all the families of the firefighters. It also pays tribute to the 800 firefighters who made the ultimate sacrifice.

As we speak in the House today, the family of volunteer firefighter, James Peter Ratcliffe, is mourning the death of their loved one in Hudson, Quebec last Monday, June 6.

This motion and the proposed amendment is supported by the International Association of Fire Fighters, the Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation and by every one of the 180,000 full time, part time and volunteer firefighters from coast to coast to coast.

Our desire in this House today is to reflect what all firefighters and their families most certainly need and deserve. I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House to present the amendment to my motion that has already been circulated to every member of this House.

[Translation]

The purpose of this amendment is to provide more flexibility in choosing the site for the monument. It also seeks to include in the motion a national public safety officer compensation fund. This request is very dear to firefighters, their associations and families, and to all public safety officers. With the endorsement of the House, this amendment will allow and encourage the government to provide true financial protection to the families of public safety officers who are killed or injured in the line of duty.

[English]

I seek the unanimous consent of the House for my motion to read as follows: That, in the opinion of this House, the government should: (a) recognize all firefighters who have fallen in the line of duty in Canada; (b) support the proposed Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation mandate for the construction of a monument in a prominent position in the national capital containing the names of all Canadian firefighters who have died in the line of duty; (c) establish a national public safety officer compensation benefit which would also compensate the families of the fallen or permanently disabled firefighters by providing them with a one-time payment of \$300,000 which would function as a direct index benefit and address their financial security; and (d) send a message to the Senate acquainting the Upper House of the decision of this House.

[Translation]

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Mr. Speaker, it is sad to see that some members in the House are not supporting what firefighters and public safety officers have been wanting, needing and deserving for a decade. It is certainly not the time to play politics with the lives and well-being of firefighters and their families. I appeal to members from every corner of the House and to their sense of justice.

We are talking about firefighters and all public safety officers who put their lives on the line. Canadians want the House to work and this is a perfect opportunity to put politics aside. The amendment is what firefighters want, need and deserve beyond any shadow of a doubt.

We will be tabling an amendment to Motion No. 153 that reflects the spirit of my amendment and what firefighters want: a compensation system for firefighters killed or disabled in the line of duty that is fair and that reflects the needs of their families.

As I mentioned, as we speak in the House today, the family members of volunteer firefighter James Peter Ratcliffe are mourning the death of their loved one in Hudson, Quebec last Monday, June 6. As we speak, firefighters and their families are paying their respects before his funeral tomorrow. James Peter Ratcliffe died in the line of duty serving his community. I would like to read into the record a passage of the report which I received from Dr. William Brooks, president of the Canadian Fallen Firefighters Foundation. Mr. Ratcliffe is the story of specifically what we ask for in amended Motion No. 153. Mr. Brooks stated:

"The entire story is a story of Canadian firefighters from coast to coast pulling for the fire department. The flag will come from Toronto. Support from the Montreal Fire Department has been without compare. The fire departments surrounding Hudson have all pitched in to assist in this time when healing is vital".

"The Hudson Fire Department is composed of a large group of young Canadians, the average age 25 or so. Men and women fill the ranks. Most are exquisitely bilingual. They have been amazing in their dedication to duty and to their fallen comrade. It has been one of my greatest privileges to be involved in a small way with their expressions of sorrow and growth".

"Finally, Peter, Diane and Jessica, James' parents and sister, have been examples of the best that people could be as they have moved among those so torn by their loss. The entire community has acted as if it had one central nervous system dedicated to working to bring solace to each other and healing to all. It makes me so proud to be a Canadian and to see the very best of how we can all function together".

There are countless other examples across this land. Firefighters also die from events that occur days, sometimes years before, due to chemical and toxic hazards. Even though they may seem all right at the scene of the incident, in them are the seeds of a premature and painful death. For instance, in Saskatoon in the 1980s firefighters were called to put out a fire at a landfill site. It was later established that someone was dumping radioactive waste materials. Six of the twelve firefighters who were present have died. All the others have cancer, years later.

I will provide another tragic case. On March 6, 1987, the Kitchener Fire Department responded to a structure fire at a local industry called Horticultural Technologies Incorporated. Those at the scene reported "smoke and flame that was every colour of the rainbow", which got into the skin and equipment of the firefighters. In total, approximately 69 firefighters

participated in the fighting of this fire. The group developed a variety of cancers that were 10 times higher than the Ontario average.

Firefighters and public safety officers, police officers, correctional officers, air traffic controllers, commercial airline pilots and paramedics play an essential role in communities small and large across the country. The work these men and women are called upon to do is physically and emotionally extreme. It also carries with it many risks that few of us can imagine, let alone contemplate carrying day in and day out. Ten to twenty die every year. Many of us saw first-hand or watched on TV the incredible work that firefighters do to protect lives, communities and property and some of the tragic consequences. The dedication of selflessness embodied by the men and women of this profession is remarkable. Firefighters are in many respects role models for us all. They rank at the top of the scale of professions. They are important to the hearts and souls of Canadians.  
(1340)

It falls upon the House that firefighters and their families, public safety officers and their families have the support they need. Motion No. 153, and my proposed amendment that was circulated to all members of the House, covers an important aspect of the needs of firefighters and their families, not only the symbolic recognition of the ultimate sacrifice, a monument to fallen firefighters as a tribute to the bravery and courage, but also the creation of a public safety officer compensation fund.

In the United States the American government created a similar benefit to fallen firefighters' families after the horrific events of September 11. Three hundred and forty-three firefighters died on September 11. Shortly after that the American government compensated their families retroactively to the tune of \$250,000 each. The American benefit that exists now for American firefighters and public safety officers is in the amount of \$274,000. It goes a significant way in addressing the financial hardship that occurs when firefighters and public safety officers die in the line of duty.

I would certainly hope, despite some procedural games that are being played, that in the end members in all four corners of the House would support, and support significantly, Motion No. 153, as amended, with the public safety officer compensation fund.

While I have a few more minutes I would like to give members of the House some of the other examples of people who are struggling and the families who are struggling because of the fact that there is not in place a public safety officer compensation benefit.

For 12 years now firefighters from across the country have given up a day a year to come to Parliament Hill to talk to members in all four parties. Members in all four parties have said, yes, that they support the principle of

a public safety officer compensation benefit. At that time no members of Parliament said that they would play procedural games. All members said that they would support the principle of the benefit.

I would like members to recall that they have met with firefighters and they have offered support to firefighters and public safety officers. I implore members not to play procedural games, but to allow this type of motion to come forward so we can finally provide to firefighters what they deserve. I will mention a couple of other cases. When a Winnipeg widow's firefighter husband died, her family income dropped by 60%. There was some group insurance money, but it was all used for funeral expenses. She had to take on two low paying jobs to try to support her family and her oldest son could not go to post-secondary school. He had to get a job right after high school to support the two younger kids.

That is the situation we have been putting the families of fallen firefighters and fallen public safety officers through. For 12 years they have been asking for a compensation benefit. It is high time that we provide their families and their surviving spouses with some compensation to survive after their sacrifice to keep us safe. They make the ultimate sacrifice. Now it is our turn to take care of their families after they have taken care of ours.

I urge all members in all corners of the House to support this motion. I urge them to make it possible to pass Motion No. 153 with the amendment calling for the creation of a public safety officer compensation benefit. This will send a strong signal to the government. This will send a strong signal to communities. This will send a signal that firefighters and their families have been waiting for for so long.

For too long firefighters and public safety officers have thought only of their communities and waited to make life better for their families in the event of their line of duty death. They have been waiting for 12 long years for action while saving countless lives. It is time for the House to act and it is time to act now.

(1345)

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Mr. Speaker, the hon. member well knows that it is not for him to determine whether a motion is in order or not. The amendment will come around and the amendment will be put on the table in the House of Commons. I certainly hopes he supports it when that amendment comes up. I appreciate his past work. I am sure many members in this House can say exactly the same thing.

It would have been simpler if we had unanimous consent at the outset, but it does not mean that this motion will not be amended. It does not mean that members of the House will not have the ability to judge the merit of the motion itself.

The reality is firefighters have waited for far too long. Public safety officers have waited for far too long. If we have to wait another 45 minutes before we get an amendment on the floor, we will do that.

I hope the member will support the amended motion when it comes forward and when we finally have the opportunity to vote on this, perhaps later this summer if this session is extended or perhaps early in the fall. I appreciate his comments and I hope that means he will be ready to support the motion as amended when it comes forward.

## **IN THE HOUSE ~ Speaking on my Private Member's Motion - M-153 - In recognition of fallen firefighters across the country**

<http://www.peterjulian.ca/page/280>

Thu 20 Oct 2005. **38TH PARLIAMENT, 1ST SESSION**

### **Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP)**

Mr. Speaker, I am rising to state unequivocally that as the mover of the main motion I support the amendment. This amendment was drafted in consultation with the Table.

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Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand and urge all members of Parliament to support Motion No. 153 as amended, which would recognize fallen firefighters across the country.

Since Confederation hundreds of firefighters have died in the line of duty and yet we have not to this date fully recognized those firefighters or their families. For 12 long years firefighters have been coming to Parliament 1 out of 365 days to ask for that recognition. Three hundred and sixty-four days of the year those firefighters put their lives on the line to protect members of the community. Since Confederation we have not as a Parliament recognized firefighters nor their families.

One day a year for 12 years they have come to this place and have asked members of Parliament to recognize their families. For 12 years there have been photo ops but there has not been any recognition.

With Motion No. 153 as amended, all members of Parliament, presumably next Wednesday, will have the ability to stand in the House and show the country that they recognize Canadian firefighters. Every member of the House will have a choice to make. They will either be voting for the recognition of firefighters who have fallen in the line of duty or they will be voting against the recognition of firefighters who have fallen in the line of duty. The choice is very clear and I hope all members of the House will vote to recognize firefighters.

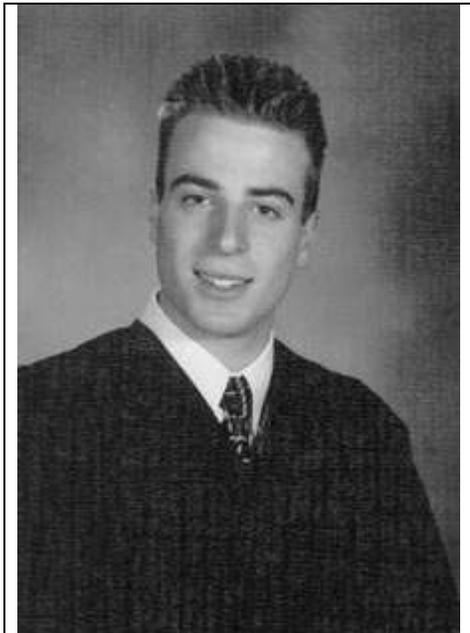
When I stood to speak in the House on June 10 in the first hour of debate on Motion No. 153, I recognized at that time the family of James Peter Ratcliffe, a firefighter in Hudson, Quebec, who died in the line of duty four days before that first hour of debate.

Since then, over the course of the summer I and other members of Parliament have urged the government to act in this regard and recognize firefighters. I participated, as did the member for Gatineau, on September 11 here on Parliament Hill in the annual memorial service for fallen firefighters. At that time we recognized a number of firefighters who died in the previous year.

I would now like to read the names of the fallen firefighters into Hansard: Captain Ernest Paul Wyndham, Edmonton Fire Department; Firefighter Chad Jerry Schapansky, Clearwater Fire Department; Platoon Chief Gerald McNally, Sault Ste. Marie Fire Department; District Chief Dale F. Long, London Fire Department; Firefighter Dustin Douglas William Engel, Sahtlam Fire Department; Captain/Pilot Kerry J. Walchuk, Clearwater, British Columbia; Captain Robert Campbell, Toronto Fire Services; Firefighter Brent Hugh Dempsey, Youngstown Fire Department; Captain John L. MacFarlane, Scarborough Fire Department; and Firefighter Walter Drake, Toronto Fire Services.

The list of names that I have just read is the names of firefighters who have fallen in the past year. Hundreds have fallen since Confederation.  
(1950)

Tonight we have had an historic debate. Next week we will have an historic vote to recognize Canadian firefighters and to recognize their families. I urge all members of the House to vote to support our firefighters, to support their recognition and to support the recognition of their families.



**In Memory of Firefighter  
James Peter Ratcliffe  
March 1985 - June 2005**

**Courage, Bravery, Honor,  
and Dedication represent  
only a fraction of James's  
qualities.**

**Let us never forget our  
fallen brother, Firefighter  
James Ratcliffe.**

<http://www.hudson-fire-rescue.com/JR.htm>

**CSST Report on the Ratcliffe Accident published  
June, 2006 <http://hudson-village.com/news/060612.shtml>**

Almost a year after the James Ratcliffe accident, the Quebec Workers' Health and Safety Commission published their report. Its main conclusion is that there was a lack of safety procedures, guidelines and practices in place with regard to the inflatable boat. In addition, a lack of safety features on the boat itself contributed to the accident.

The immediate cause of the accident was a sharp right turn initiated by the instructor to simulate an emergency manoeuvre. James Ratcliffe was sitting on the side of the inflatable boat but had no seat and no way of holding on. As a result, he was ejected from the boat which slid over him, injuring him with the propeller.

The Commission was critical of the way the training was organized, without safety guidelines and without adequate training in boat and marine basics. It also highlighted the lack of seats and of hand-holds on the boat. Even previous to the release of the report, the Hudson fire department had come to its own conclusions and had remedied many of the problems with the boat. The town will review its own handling of safety with regard to its employees and firemen.

## **Inadequate planning blamed for Quebec firefighter's death**

<http://www.firefightingincanada.com/content/view/1555/67/>

August 2006 Written by Administrator

August 2006 - MONTREAL (CP) – Inadequate planning for a water rescue training manoeuvre was one of the causes behind the boating accident that killed a 20-year-old Hudson, Que., volunteer firefighter last June. August 2006 - MONTREAL (CP) – Inadequate planning for a water rescue training manoeuvre was one of the causes behind the boating accident that killed a 20-year-old Hudson, Que., volunteer firefighter last June.

That is among the findings of a workplace safety board investigation into the accident on Lake of Two Mountains on June 6, 2005, the Montreal Gazette has reported.

James Ratcliffe and two other volunteer firefighters from Hudson were taking an introductory training session on driving a water rescue boat.

Near the end of the session, Ratcliffe was ejected from the inflatable boat, driven by an instructor, during a demonstration of a tight turn – an emergency manoeuvre used in various situations. He died after his head struck the boat's propeller.

The report released in late May by the workers' health and safety commission said the firefighters didn't adequately identify the risks in advance and the

safety measures to put in place before making the turn.

“We’re not saying it’s forbidden to do those manoeuvres,” said Louis Genest, head of prevention-inspection at the commission's regional office in nearby Valleyfield. “But when you have to do manoeuvres like that, you have to analyze the risks and foresee adequate prevention measures.”

Among the other causes of the accident, the report noted Ratcliffe was seated in an unstable position on the inflatable edge of the boat. Participants had been seated that way because there were no seats for passengers in the boat, the report said.

Genest said it is recommended people be inside the boat and have two solid fixtures on which to hold to ensure stability.

Peter Ratcliffe praised the report into his son's death. He did not point fingers at individuals, zeroing in instead on training. “The issue is lack of ongoing training,” he said. “And it's something across Canada – volunteer fire departments are starved for funds.”

Hudson Fire Chief Peter Milot said he told the commission there were no guidelines prior to the accident. For marine rescue, the standard operational procedures weren't structured, “so every department worked to the best of its ability,” he said.