

## Richmond Review

# Is hovercraft in poor shape?

By Martin van den Hemel - Richmond Review

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The Canadian Coast Guard denies its West Coast search-and-rescue hovercraft is in poor shape and can't perform its duties.

But a source told *The Richmond Review* that not only is the Penac's condition questionable, but that crews have been advised to limit the vessel's operations and to avoid surface operations.

The problem: Hull corrosion that's beyond repair, the source said.

But Capt. Duke Snider, regional director of operations for the Pacific Region of the Canadian Coast Guard denied there are any issues that make the Penac unable to perform its tasked duties.

"Right now, the Penac is the primary SAR (search and rescue) unit. She's on call as we speak, 24 hours. She's fully operational. She's fully safe for the entire suite of operations that she may be called in for. That's the bottom line. She's 100 per cent up and ready to go," he said.

He denied there are any conditions with the hull that make the Penac unsafe for operations.

Asked if there's hull corrosion that's beyond repair, Snider said: "I can't speak to that. I don't know where that's come from. I do know that she's an older machine and that she's up for replacement. But I'm certainly not aware of anything that is unrepairable."

Meanwhile, late last month, the wraps were pulled off a state-of-the-art \$16 million hovercraft that will break ice and patrol the Gulf of St. Lawrence.