

Waste Authority GM returns to Sri Lanka

By DANIEL SCHWAB

Essex-Windsor Solid Waste Authority General Manager Todd Pepper is returning to Sri Lanka in November in an effort to help re-stabilize the control of waste in the tsunami-ravaged country.

Nine months after the natural disaster of Dec. 26, 2004, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Canadian International Development Agency established a four-year program to address regional and governmental needs for the Asian country.

One of the major areas identified in the program is the control of waste. Much of the waste that surfaced during the tsunami was dumped into the Indian Ocean, causing health risks for many Sri Lankan citizens. Pepper made his first trip to the country last November for an introductory assessment of conditions in the city of Galle. What he found was garbage being dumped in the street, rats and other vermin and a fleet of sanitation vehicles destroyed by the tsunami's heavy waves. The FCM is sending a new group of delegates to the area on Nov. 1.

After two more working



missions, one last February and another in July, Pepper helped as part of a program geared toward educating Galle residents about composting, recycling, and the hazards of mismanaged waste.

Seventeen-hundred households were provided with backyard composters, containers for garbage and educational materials in both Tamil and Sinhala, the country's two main languages.

"Literally, when we were

handing out composters and garbage pails, it was amazing the amounts of hugs and kisses we received from every resident," Pepper said. "They understand (waste) is a problem and their health and safety are at risk. They're very enthusiastic. Hopefully it will make a difference."

In November, Pepper will get a chance to see how much of a difference has been made.

If it worked, he says, the

program will be expanded to Galle's entire population of 300,000 and, eventually, to other regions in Sri Lanka.

Sanitation vehicles and the possible creation of a landfill site will also be considered.

"They have no disposal system," Pepper said. "(The program) is looking for property to create a landfill site so waste stops running into marshes and streams."

Pepper said following the

REBUILDING AFTER TSUNAMI – Essex-Windsor Solid Waste Authority General Manager Todd Pepper works elbow-deep in a pile of garbage with a collection crew during a recent trip to Sri Lanka. Pepper has been asked by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to help work on waste management strategies in the tsunami-damaged country.

November trip there will be two missions in 2007 and an evaluation of the project the following year, when it will be decided whether a third phase will be necessary.

The FCM's total budget is \$13 million, and involves projects in four different communities in Sri Lanka.

FCM's regional manager for Asia, Sebastien Hamel, said Pepper has been instrumental in getting results in the area.

"He has a special skill to get back to the basics," Hamel said. "He knows how to work with people and transfer his expertise."

The Sri Lankan project will be in operation until March 2009, Hamel said.

By that time, the FCM plans to have a long-term regional site established as a solution to waste disposal. Currently, much of the solid waste is being put into temporary landfills, mostly farmlands.

It was Pepper's previous waste management work with the FCM in such areas as Thailand and Olongapo in the Philippines that lead Hamel to personally invite him to participate in the project.

"Olongapo is now recognized as the best kept city in the country," Hamel said.

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COATS FOR KIDS – the annual campaign is now on. Every year a network of community agencies across Windsor-Essex County work together to distribute winter coats to children and families in need. We rely on the community to donate gently used coats to this program. *Coats can be dropped off at Essex Community Services until Oct 31.*

ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF WINDSOR & ESSEX COUNTY – PRESENTS: TRANSITIONS INFORMATION WORKSHOP: THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2006 from 8:30am to 12pm. This workshop is for caregivers of persons with dementia. It is being offered at the Centres for Seniors, 635 McEwan Windsor. Free parking is available and light refreshments will be served. You must pre-register for this workshop by calling (519) 974-2220. Some of the issues that will be discussed are: How do I know when it's time to consider Long-Term care placement for my loved one? Are there alternatives to Long-Term Care placement? Are there services to help me during the waiting period? How do I begin the application process? *Any one interested is encouraged to call and register as space is limited.*

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