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"The war has certainly affected their [municipalities'] ability to move forward," said Forbes. He cited an example of a children's playground being occupied and used by the military. Due to the current state of martial law and the financial drain of civil war, planning and development at the municipal level has not been a priority in recent years.

Though Forbes "felt very safe" while traveling through the region, his aid team was at one point restricted access to a town that they were scheduled to visit due to 'violence.'

Throughout his assessment, Forbes was working with aid groups and non-government organizations to coordinate needs in an effective manner. Following the expedition, CIDA's Program Support Unit, the Sri Lankan High Commissioner, special commissioners from several municipalities and representatives from each aid organization met to make sure there would be no overlaps or skipped areas of need.

Following the assessment phase of the project, trained specialists from Canadian municipalities will begin integrating basic infrastructure plans and training citizens in the maintenance and upkeep of such programs.

Forbes stressed the need for organization when undertaking a task like restructuring a municipality. "What would you start with first?" he asked.

In addition, he recognized that the process takes many years; "urgency and long-term - it's that balance," he said.

Unfortunately, two weeks was all the time Forbes was given for his role in the project. He is unsure whether he will be asked to return.

"If they called me... by all means, I would look forward to the opportunity to go back," he said. For now, Forbes is happy with the job that he did and the assessment he was able to provide, explaining that, "I felt very good about the fact that we [were] asking the right questions in regard to what they needed."

One particular area of need that

Forbes highlighted as somewhat special is for books. In Trincomalee, "we went into a temporary reading room and it was packed," he said. The regular library had been nearly destroyed. In total, approximately 40,000 books were lost. The books left are out-of-date, yet there is still a want to read and learn within the community.

"They're looking for knowledge," said Forbes. "Education means a lot to the Tamil community."

Forbes feels that though there are more pressing concerns to be addressed elsewhere in the community, "I think the FCM felt that that is something we can help out with," he said.

After what he called an extremely interesting and rewarding experience, Forbes explained that he was most affected by the children he saw in the various communities. With very limited infrastructure surrounding them, they appeared content with what they had.

"People really do spring back from these disasters very quickly and move on."

Profile: Fredericton's Deputy Police Chief

by Chiaki Sadanaga

Back in the 1970s, what many girls dreamt of being in the future was a nurse, a teacher, and a mother. Not a police officer - indeed, that was what boys dreamt of.

"Dad, I want to be a policeman like you," Leanne Fitch said. Her father, wearing a big storm coat and his forage cap, said to Leanne, "honey, there is no such thing as 'policewomen'."

"That's ok daddy," Leanne responded to her father, "because I know I'll be the first one." She was only four years old at that time.

Time has passed. Here in Fredericton, Leanne has been selected as the city's deputy police chief, and began her new role on September 19. Her dream has come true, and now she is called Sgt. Fitch.

"We are [aiming at] making police more approachable, accessible, and efficient," said Fitch. She is excited about initiating change for the members of the police department "to better serve the community."

Fitch is a 20-year police veteran. Her first experience of policing was as an auxiliary officer and a park patrol officer with the Fredericton Police Force, in 1983, while she was studying at the University of New Brunswick. Two years later, she was waiting for graduation and her opportunity to go to the Atlantic Police Academy.

"I thought going to the Atlantic Police Academy was the only option I had," Fitch said. "But I happened to be working with a patrol officer..." she explained, recalling the evening that opened her eyes. The patrol officer that she was working with that night worked for the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force for 14 years.

"Why don't you take a look at the Metro?" he asked me," said Fitch. "I never even considered it as an option because I didn't realize there were other agencies across Canada [where] I could apply." She immediately applied to be a police officer in Toronto and got hired there.

She was really excited to be in Toronto and loved her training and policing experience. "But...I was despairingly homesick," said Fitch. She was 21 years old.

Although she had to come back to Fredericton after staying in Toronto for a year, Fitch had amazing experiences while being in Toronto.

"East of the downtown core, unbelievable experience in terms of cultural exposure... we had a big area of Greek, Italian, Vietnamese and so on," she said, "to me, coming from Fredericton, that was real highlight, because I could go from one block to another and be in a different world."

Because she loved so much about what she was doing in Toronto, it was difficult for her to make a

decision to come back to Fredericton.

"I knew I was leaving behind a lot of exciting opportunities to do different types of policing," Fitch said, "my heart and my family brought me home." She wanted to be with her family, especially with her father who was having a heart operation.

Fitch's passion for policing comes from her father, who was an RCMP officer. Since she was a child, she's had great admiration for her father.

"My father represented what a policeman should be," Fitch said.

"He is kind, compassionate, has a wonderful sense of justice and a deep sense of caring for people." Even though her father, at first, didn't want Fitch to be a police officer (as every father, he was worried about her safety and wanted to protect her from any danger), he has always supported her and been happy about her career as a police officer.

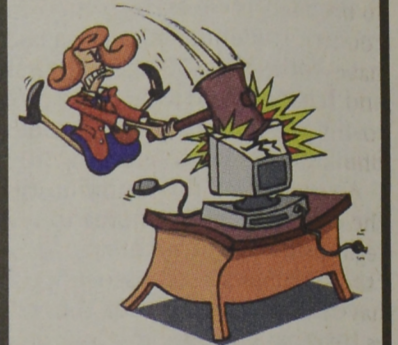


Alex Forbes, Director of Development Planning, traveled to Sri Lanka to aid municipalities in rebuilding their economies.



Chiaki Sadanaga / The Brunswickan

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