

World-travelling councillor brings ideas back to Halton Hills

By Cynthia Gamble
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Halton Hills— a town of about 60,000 people— has already made a well known footprint on the national stage, but lately one local councillor has become a star on the international one.

Wards 1&2 Regional Councillor Clark Somerville, who represents the Acton and rural areas of Halton Hills, has been collecting frequent flyer miles around the world, in his capacity as first vice-president of FCM— Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

In 2015, Somerville, with FCM colleagues, trekked to Peru, South America on a technical mission to aid mining communities with building better government, and later in the year, he was part of the worldwide environmental summit held in Paris, France.

Somerville spoke about his experiences in an interview with *The Independent & Free Press*, and again to members of the Town's Corporate Affairs committee last week.

It was good prep for the councillor, who in June becomes the president of FCM, the national organization which represents municipalities on a pro-

vincial, national and international level.

"I am really lucky because Mayor Rick Bonnette and Halton Region Chair Gary Carr have allowed me to do this— take on this role, and I couldn't do it without the support of the councils," Somerville said.

He has come back from both trips with ideas and actions he wants to accomplish. It began last week at the committee meeting when members approved a series of motions:

- to direct staff to report back on signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with FCM on participating in the CISAL (Sustainable and Inclusive Communities in Latin America) program to work with local governments in mining communities in Peru and Colombia;
- to direct Town and Halton Hills Hydro staff to investigate the feasibility of a smart grid street lighting system for the Vision Georgetown new greenfield subdivision;
- that staff report back on the mayor signing the Compact of the Mayors agreement— a pledge made by mayors around the world to reduce greenhouse gases and to prepare for climate change. Somerville noted that Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette has been ahead of the game on this



Halton Hills Regional Councillor Clark Somerville posing outside the climate change conference in Paris, France. Submitted photo

subject for many years.

"I don't think people here realize what a leader the Town of Halton Hills is with our sustainability plans," he said, "I had someone walk up to me in Paris and said the Halton Hills Sustainability Plan and the Community Energy Plans are excellent and a model for other communities. And we don't realize that because we're inside the bubble. It was not uncommon to receive these comments."

While in Paris, Somerville spoke at the United Cities and Local Governments conference on what Canadian municipalities are doing on climate change mitigation. He noted Halton Hills's five geothermal facilities and Vancouver's pledge to be completely powered by renewable energy by 2050. He also talked about FCM's successful

Green Municipal Fund, which has helped more than 250 towns and cities achieve greenhouse gas reductions and energy efficiencies through facility upgrades.

Somerville says municipalities are the new grassroots movement, promoting climate change policies and actions.

"Absolutely, without question," he said. "When 40-60 per cent of the greenhouse gases are produced by municipalities, we the ones who are going to have to figure out what we're going to do. Roads, bridges, water plants, wastewater plants, arenas, libraries— they're all creating greenhouse gases. But I am also realistic to know we are not going to change things on a dime. But we can start

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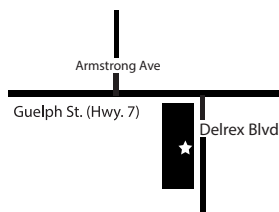
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