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Councillor Clark Somerville reflects on term as FCM president

By Kathryn Boyle
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Having traveled more than 75,000 miles and taken 60 different flights to places all over Canada, Halton Hills councillor Clark Somerville is only just halfway through his term as FCM president.

Last year, Somerville was inducted as president to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM): an organization that gives a voice to all the municipalities in Canada. He said he has lived a lifetime of experiences and it's just the mid-point of his term.

We've had a government that's been very committed to building municipal capacity, Somerville explained. And these programs are going to be transformative and we have to make sure they get it right, so we have to give them the input to what will benefit communities of all sizes.

To voice the concerns of Canadian municipalities is no easy task. The smallest member of FCM is a community of just 11 members. The biggest? Toronto.

It's that diversity that you end up trying to

balance, he said.

During his term, Somerville has had a number of FCM firsts.

The first is the first time the FCM has ever been asked to present for all the provincial and territorial ministers of infrastructure, he said.

So I had a seat at the table with all the federal and provincial ministers and the minister of infrastructure in Edmonton.

It was a tremendous discussion, just about what municipal infrastructure needs are, he said, noting the bigger issues of rural Internet, transit, social housing, wastewater and municipal capacity.

Another first: Jean-Yves Duclos, the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, invited FCM to present to the provincial ministers of housing as well as the aboriginal minister.

It was the first time the four orders of government in Canada were sitting down discussing an issue like that, he said. It's what I call the four-sided table: federal, provincial, municipal and aboriginal leaders all talking about issues. It was the first time we ever had the four-sided table sitting down to talk.

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