

Somerville on experience: incredibly rewarding

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Somerville was also included in the last official dinner of the U.S. President Obama administration where former vice president Joe Biden was in attendance.

I was the only municipally elected person in the room, Somerville said.

Here's this guy, grew up in Acton, been in Halton Hills my whole life. And I'm there at a dinner with the vice-president of the U.S. All the former prime ministers were there, all the cabinet ministers, the MPs from all parties, the senators. It was just absolutely fascinating to be there.

Biden and Somerville were able to exchange a few words in which they discussed Somerville's role in Halton Hills.

I told him it was an honour to meet him, it was such a tremendous honour, he said. I told him I was the president of the FCM and a councillor in southern Ontario. He asked about FCM, so I gave my 30-second elevator speech, and he said, good for you. He said the hardest-working officials are those at the local level.

At a different event, Somerville was introduced to Prince Charles, where they discussed the Lucy Maud Mont-

gomery house in Norval and the town of Halton Hills.

One of the biggest functions of FCM is to work closely with the current government in power, and working with the federal level gives FCM a platform to voice the concerns of the municipal levels, such as rural broadband.

We've laid a lot of groundwork, Somerville said. We have to wait to see the budget, to see if they've listened to all our requests, but at least we're out there advocating for them.

Advocacy, sometimes, is a long game, he said. You may be here talking about the stuff now, but the federal government works slow and it might take a couple years to get there.

In the upcoming year, Somerville will be focused on lending a hand in the transition of the new president, Jenny Gerbasi, who is the deputy mayor for the city of Winnipeg and will act as an advisor to her and the vice-president.

In 2017, hopefully we'll see all the work with the federal government paying off, he said. I will also be getting the next president prepared. And also getting to catch my breath, he laughed.

The experience has left Somerville



Above, Halton Hills councillor and FCM president Clark Somerville accepts a medal of honour from President Oscar Benavides Majino on behalf of the Peruvian Municipal Association. Submitted photo

with skills that will enrich his life going forward as both a Halton Hills resident and councillor.

Being on FCM has made me a better councillor, he said. You're trying to look at things in the bigger picture and not get bogged down with the minutiae.

It's been incredibly rewarding

because I never would have thought that the level of respect you get is overwhelming, he said. It's been truly humbling when you see the dedication and commitment from people to their communities. It's also been humbling to see the support from Halton Hills, and especially council.



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By Cory Soal R.H.A.D.

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