

FCM to assist government spending designated for housing, infrastructure

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Halton Hills councillor Clark Somerville may hold the title of past-president with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), but he is still very much involved in some of its major initiatives.

Last month, Somerville and Blair Lancaster, a Burlington councillor, both attended a FCM Board of Directors meeting in Alberta to discuss how decisions in the federal government's national infrastructure plan and the National Housing Strategy can transform communities across Canada.

The federal government introduced phase two of its infrastructure plan, which consists of \$81 billion, and examined the ways the funds could be utilized.

"We have never stopped planning for infrastructure since I've been on FCM," Somerville told the Independent.

In fall 2007, the federal government introduced its infrastructure deficit in Canada, being \$123 billion, and it's since grown.

The majority of Canada's infrastructure, which consists of bridges, roads, and more, was built over 50 years ago and is meeting the end of its life cycle.

With FCM, Somerville will work closely with the government and with municipalities across Canada to distribute the fund-

ing.

"This is a game-changer for communities," he explained. "Once in a generation does something like this come along."

"The Prime Minister came up to me and said: 'This is your budget,'" he said. "This is a historic budget. We have never had this much money over a 10- to 11-year time frame."

The National Housing Strategy is another matter FCM will be working closely on, with \$15 billion available from the government. Details on how the money will be utilized will be published at a later date.

"The National Housing Strategy is an important component to Canada's housing system, and it's essential that the federal government focus on fundamentals such as repairing social housing," Lancaster said in a press release. "Leveraging our local expertise to build new affordable homes that fit long-range community plans is the message that we are trying to deliver."

Somerville is optimistic about the upcoming discussions regarding both the strategy and the infrastructure plan, and is looking forward to what the future will bring.

"FCM works closely with 18 provincial associations, so when we approach both provincial and federal governments, we will be a united voice," he said.

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