

# Speaking for the silent majority

After weeks of biting my tongue, I've finally had my fill. This week, I'm speaking on behalf of the silent majority in town.

Lately, this newspaper has run stories about the Town of Halton Hills council considering adding arenas in town. It came to a head during the budget meetings in January.

The biggest item on the table, coming in at \$29 million, was the plan to build three arenas before 2014— a twin pad at Mold-Masters SportsPlex and the twinning of the Acton Arena.

After a flash of common sense, council voted 7-4 to review the budget and re-think the need and consequences of the Town going into debt for more than \$25 million to build those arenas.

Since then, *The Independent & Free Press* has been deluged with letters from the vocal minority— many of them Walter Gretzky wannabes who figure their kid is gonna be the next Wayne.

Now I'm all for providing venues for sports groups to pursue their on-ice activities, be it hockey, figure skating, etc.— if we can afford it. But I'm also adamant that the Town be financially responsible— and going into debt for \$25 million isn't being responsible. It's a textbook case of 'wants' over 'needs'.

The vocal minority has come out in droves claiming we MUST build those arenas, or be faced with our kids traveling out of town to play hockey. Some have even suggested we'll have a generation of overweight kids if we don't build those arenas.

Puh-leese! If you're that concerned about kids' fitness, turn off the TV, shut down the computer games and send 'em outside to shovel the sidewalk or perhaps even your senior neighbour's sidewalk. Don't play a guilt card on taxpayers— take responsibility for your own kids.

In Tuesday's edition, we ran excerpts from letters to the editor, as to why it's imperative we build those arenas.

One writer listed all the fees for out-of-town hockey schools he'd enrolled his kid in, totaling \$1,350.

Do I care? Did someone hold a gun to his head to sign up his kid? That was his choice; not a reason to build more arenas.

Others talk about the costs of sign-up fees and equipment. One parent I know spent \$700 on skates and \$200 on a hockey stick.

## Ted Brown



Where is the reality there?

If parents spend huge money for their kids to play hockey, that's their choice— but I fail to see how those exorbitant investments in equipment or hockey schools has any bearing on whether we need more arenas.

Proponents of the three arenas claim thousands of kids need ice time— more than 4,200 they say.

Do the math— that's about 8 per cent of the Town's population. Now explain why the remaining 92 per cent should endure a tax increase to accommodate the 8 per cent who use the facilities?

Is it fair to seniors on fixed incomes? Is it fair to local business people, trying to scratch out a living? Is it fair to those who never darken the door of a rink?

Believe me, there's thousands of members in that silent majority, quietly sitting back while a vocal minority convincingly screams and hollers that we need more arenas.

There are more pressing needs in the town.

The finger is regularly pointed at the new library in Acton— replacing a building built in 1967 that was decades overdue.

There's a Town request for \$4.5 million to help fund the new CT scanner and renovation at Georgetown Hospital —another no-brainer; everyone benefits. What if a hockey player splits his head open on-ice and needs a scan pronto?

For all of you members of that silent majority, it's time to stand up for what you believe in. It's time to become vocal. It's time to say you don't want to pay thousands of extra tax dollars for decades to allow 8 per cent to play.

The bottom line? We can't afford it. If you agree, call your councillor and complain.

And if you don't agree, then put your money where your mouth is and cough up a few million....

—Ted Brown can be reached at [tbrown@independentfreepress.com](mailto:tbrown@independentfreepress.com)

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