

Readers weigh in on potential funding plan for arenas

Below are excerpts of dozens of letters to the editor received in response to Ted Brown's January 27 column, Speaking for the silent majority, regarding the Town's potential decision to go \$25 million in debt to fund the building of three ice surfaces in Halton Hills. Town council is expected to make a decision on the issue later this month.

Dear editor,

I have never been compelled to write to an editor before but in regards to Ted Brown's column regarding the new arenas, I have to speak up as he has hit the proverbial nail on the head.

The only thing I would have added is this: you want it, you pay for it. All of it.

Matthew Keen, Georgetown

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Arenas are a want, not a need.

Our children need education and health care. They do not need expensive facilities for a small minority.

Having our government go into debt only passes on our current problems to our children.

Steve Schafer, Georgetown

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Ted Brown's column reflects my sentiments exactly. If the town can even consider subsidizing a small minority's favourite sporting activity by building additional ice pads, then they should also be paying for the facilities for every residents' preferred sport. Fair is fair. While they're at it, the town could build golf courses, a ski hill and gymnasiums.

This whole issue also says something about the expectations of today's younger generations. As a compromise, wouldn't outdoor pads with refrigeration pipes resolve the problem? Or would hockey moms and dads be upset because their double doubles get cold!

Dan Poirier, Acton

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Have you ever thought about a solution rather than to blame a group of people?

It is my right as a community member, a taxpayer who strongly volunteers my time and pays expensive registration fees that pay for our rinks and pay to employ people within our community to speak my mind. These rinks are a must for both Acton and Georgetown to help support many activities including our "seniors" that you mentioned in your article, as they too will be receiving the benefit of a new seniors' centre.

Why not stop bashing one another on projects we all will benefit from and unite as a community to come up with ways we can all help both projects happen! Let's make a difference by leading instead of making this a "you group" against an "us group"!

Brenda Geim, Acton



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Thank you so much for voicing what many of the silent majority think regarding spending our hard-earned tax money on more, let's be honest and call them "hockey" arenas because they sure aren't arenas for the vast majority of the town to use.

Unfortunately the public skating times are limited to a couple of hours on a Sunday afternoon. There are maybe a few hours during the weekdays, but then I am working to pay taxes for these arenas.

I think we have enough arenas funded by our tax dollars for those who can afford to pay for hockey and not enough time for those who foot the bills.

Debra Hayes, Georgetown

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At last a common sense look at why we should not spend all of those millions on arenas.

This for about 8 per cent of the population is totally uncalled for in the present economic times. As senior citizens on fixed income who have lived here for many years and helped pay for those original existing arenas I see no reason why we should have to pay again.

Why is this not paid for by the private sector and the developers who have encouraged the new population into the area, then the people who use the arenas pay through the user fees.

What happens to these arenas during school hours? Do these expensive items sit idle?

Can these people we elect do nothing more than spend, spend and spend more?

John Sanders, Georgetown

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I do not wish to have my taxes raised for a new arena of which my family or I will never use. I just cannot afford another tax raise.

As for the hospital, I am unfortunately not looking forward to this increase as well. I feel that it should be passed, but it again places a burden upon us all. The money they need WILL benefit us all and it makes sense.

If you ask me, it is time for the arenas to become privatized. I am quite certain if they were put to a vote there is no doubt in my mind what the out-

come would be.

William Kelley, Acton

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I agree 100% with you on this issue, there are far more important things to address other than arenas.

If parents want their kids in hockey that is their choice, not mine. Seniors pay enough taxes for services they don't use without additional taxes to pay for sports, You are quite right there are a lot of other things you can do to keep fit.

C. Hall, Georgetown

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Ted, you are RIGHT ON! I think most of our residents can afford \$25 or even \$50 more each year on their tax bill. Maybe we could build half of the desired arenas, but I think the hospital is the priority.

Murray Henley, Georgetown

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Thank you so much for putting in print what so many residents of our town are thinking. As a resident and business owner in Georgetown, I applaud your efforts to bring forth the voice of the silent majority. I would gladly support higher taxes in order to see the hospital improved, but would have a difficult time agreeing to the same for an arena.

Vince Ruso, Georgetown

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Mr. Brown, I must admit I am not in agreement with your assessment.

Presently, I have 2 grandsons ages 9 and 7. The 9 year old plays hockey in the Saturday morning house league and has hockey practice once a month. For the past month, games have been at 6:15 a.m. That's all the time that can be provided. My other grandson plays on a rep team and gets more ice time, but does pay considerable amount of money for this luxury.

I do not use any of the public facilities. I have no children in school so why should I pay education taxes or taxes which will provide facilities for other members of your municipality? I believe we all have a responsibility to contribute to all facilities being a user or non-user.

If you were so concerned about this extra tax cost you should have lobbied Halton Hills council years ago not to

develop lands knowing that facilities are going to be required to accommodate all the needs of our youth.

Dwayne Hay, Georgetown

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I have been following the letters from irate parents, and cannot believe some of the comments.

One comment, apparently made at the meeting about the proposed hospital expansion, stated that we cannot steal from the arenas to pay for the hospital struck me as particularly ludicrous

I don't relish the thought of paying more taxes, but if it means a better equipped hospital then I'm all for it.

J. Snyder, Georgetown

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Great common sense article! When I was young in Saskatchewan, we had an outdoor rink with plywood barriers. The skating was just as good as in any arena! And it didn't cost millions!

John Juhasz, Acton

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Why are the "power arena users" so willing to have the town go into so much debt, as well as make taxpayers receive a huge tax increase so that they get new arenas?

The people who want these should show good faith by raising a significant portion of the funds needed in advance of them being built. As well user fees should be increased dramatically to cover the true cost of ice time. It is only fair. I appreciate council's hesitance and hope they continue to make prudent decisions.

Andy Abrahamse, Georgetown

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I have lived in Georgetown for more than 45 years and have seen tax increases almost every year.

I am not against having new arenas but, as you point out, there are more pressing needs for the majority of the people of Halton Hills. The expansion of the hospital is a greater benefit to the populace at large and, while I am not sure that all the proposed expansion is required, if tax increases are required to get the job done then better this than new arenas.

Doug Brownlee, Georgetown

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I agree with Ted Brown's no-brainer column.

Reduce funding for ice surfaces that a minority of the population WANT and fund the hospital expansion that a majority of the population NEED.

Pat Farley, Georgetown

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As a senior citizen on a limited income property taxes are fast becoming the single biggest item in our budget with the only solution it seems is to sell our family home. At this point in our life it is not a desirable solution. Again I, and I am sure many others, applaud your good work.

Paul Brown, Georgetown