

Okay, lets get our priorities in order. If my kid can't skate in town at a time that is convenient for me, it's not going to cost him his life.

If, on the other hand, he requires an emergency CT scan, and is unable to receive one because our hospital hasn't got the facilities, that could definitely cost him his life.

Which is really more important?

*Pat Akey, Georgetown*

•••

I am writing to express my total disagreement with the tone and content of your article.

I know you long for the simpler days when Halton Hills was a mainly farming community and you could drive your tractor everywhere, but the reality is it has grown into an urban centre and Halton Hills council's lack of urban planning has resulted in a lack of recreation facilities in town.

The examples of money being spent on hockey training out of town are but examples of the revenue that is bleeding from our municipality due to a lack of facilities. Arenas as opposed to libraries are revenue generators. If managed properly, a majority of the money spent can be recovered through revenue generated by facility rentals down the road, offsetting the costs of the monies borrowed to pay for them. Libraries are a dying institution.

We have one of the highest rates of participation in minor hockey per 1,000 residents in Ontario yet we have the smallest number of facilities as compared to municipalities of similar size.

The Georgetown and Acton Minor Hockey Associations have pledged to merge and assist in fundraising much like the Georgetown Soccer Association did for the Field of Dreams project at GDHS. They have agreed to pay higher rental fees for more ice time than is available now.

*Steven Buckingham, Georgetown*

•••

In the current debate as to funding requirements for the hospital expansion, hockey rinks, library, etc, only tax payers and governments have been cited as fund providers. What about developers?

The growth in people and houses in Georgetown has been exponential in the 30 years that I have lived here, leading to ever-increasing congestion on the roads and town facilities unable to cope with increased demands. Since the developers are part of the problem shouldn't they be part of the solution?

As a senior with a hockey playing grandson I have interests in both current issues.

Whilst I know that development charges are paid to the Town by developers, perhaps they are nowhere near sufficient to offset the problems caused by them in the first place.

I might have a different opinion of developers were I to walk into either a new wing of the hospital, or a hockey arena with their name above the door. Come on guys, step up to the plate.

*Bill Shuttleworth, Georgetown*



A proposal is before Halton Hills council to add two more ice pads to the Mold-Masters SportsPlex (above) and another to Acton Arena. To do so, however, the Town will have to go into debt to the tune of \$25 million. *File photo*

**Web Poll**

**A current funding plan would see the Town of Halton Hills go \$25 million in debt to finance the construction of three new ice surfaces. As a Halton Hills taxpayer do you support this spending plan?**

**Vote online at:**

**[www.independentfreepress.com](http://www.independentfreepress.com)**

•••

The \$4.5 million requested from our council (i.e. the property taxpayers of Halton Hills) for the Georgetown Hospital will benefit more people when their need is greatest than a five-fold bigger expenditure on new ice pads.

It should be noted, however, that the provision of health services is a provincial responsibility and that Ontario taxpayers are already assessed an Ontario Health Premium on top of their income tax.

The electorate of Halton Hills should bear this in mind when it comes to voting at the next provincial election and, perhaps, urge their representatives to seek the redirection of the proceeds of the Ontario Health Premium, collected from Halton Hills taxpayers, towards the needs of Georgetown Hospital.

*K.R. Borkowski, Acton*

•••

As a senior we need essential services first, our hospital is getting overloaded from Brampton due to their wait time which is putting a strain on our hospital and staff.

Our taxes are already too high and we do not need an increase in taxes for "non-essential services" to support a minority group of skaters.

*Ken Wood, Speyside*

•••

While I agree we would like to have adequate facilities to have all of our children to play and practice their sport in our own community, we have to make tough choices.

Having 8 per cent of the population dictate where we need to place our tax dollars is setting a dangerous precedent for our elected officials.

I think if council looks at this argument logically they will see that 92 per cent of the taxpayers need to be heard.

*Catherine Brown, Georgetown*

•••

I couldn't have said it better myself.

It's even more annoying, living at a rural address, and paying to take my garbage to the dump and paying for septic pumping, to see "townies" screaming for more arenas.

I have nothing against hockey or kids, but I'm tired of hearing that hockey is a prerequisite for being Canadian. Bully for you for saying what most people are thinking. Our mill rate has gone up every year for the 15 years that we've lived in Halton Hills and, apart from recyclable collection, services haven't improved one iota.

I, for one, will be writing my councillor to complain, bitterly.

*Linda Webster, Speyside*

•••

Well done, that's what I love about you and your column— you say it as it is. You are always bang on the money.

*Dave Mason, Georgetown*

•••

Having read your excellent article "Speaking for the silent majority" I took your challenge to heart. Below is (part of) the e-mail sent to my two councillors for Ward 4:

First, I would commend you and the other elected councillors for stepping back and having second thoughts regarding the expenditure of \$25 million for three new ice surfaces. That, in itself, is showing responsibility to the taxpayers of Georgetown.

The obvious priority for ALL in our town is the hospital's request. Not only is it one-sixth the amount of money (for arenas) but it benefits every citizen.

I know that council does NOT have a difficult decision to make. It is very obvious where the priority lies even though some will not agree.

*Loison M. Helmer, Georgetown*

•••

We never miss your articles, and truly enjoy them but this last one got our attention, and we agree 100% with you.

Since reading your article Jim has contacted his councillor and been to the municipal office. Thanks for getting us moving.

*Jim & Kay Bailey, Georgetown*

•••

As a parent with teenagers who have been actively involved in sports since they were old enough to participate, I agree with ensuring we have active children. What I don't agree with is having my taxes increase to pay for a facility that they would rarely use.

Since I am not a hockey or figure skating parent (yes, there are other sports being played in Acton), I feel that my taxes should actually go towards government infrastructure.

This decision should be based on what is the best for Halton Hills, not what is best for the hockey players.

Please don't get me wrong—I support that parents involve their children in hockey. It's just that I don't want my tax dollars going to something that my family does not utilize.

*J. Gies, Acton*

•••

You make some very good points. In my view there is more ammunition for you in Eamonn Maher's Jan. 27 article (Merger in jeopardy without arenas, say hockey execs).

There Carson Mininch is credited with stating the Georgetown and Acton minor hockey groups will not be able to merge and work together without new arenas and a \$25 million taxpayer investment. I have to wonder why 35+ years after amalgamation of the municipality, these two groups are still not working together as one group addressing minor hockey needs. I have to wonder why they would be able to merge and work together on seven ice surfaces but cannot with four.

Most of all I have to wonder why they would think the people of Halton Hills would want to invest another \$25 million in a group that already has access to several millions of dollars worth of taxpayer assets and seemingly cannot (amalgamate) work together to optimize those assets.

*Bob Meads, Georgetown*

•••

I must take issue with Ted Brown's column. For a start, his 8 per cent is a "political statistic" to try and show that 92 per cent are against the proposal. This 92 per cent obviously includes the player's family. This 8 per cent should realistically be 3 or 4 times that size. He has also left out figure skaters and recreational skaters so his number is quite meaningless.

When I first came to Georgetown 40 years ago... all these facilities were built and paid for by the Town and its residents. Should I now stand up and say, "No" I don't want to pay for facilities for the next generation?

Is this just a bedroom community where you work and play elsewhere or is it a place where you and your family can find the things that you would like to do or need?

*J.M. Graham-Smith, Georgetown*