

The following are excerpts of letters received in response to Ted Brown's Jan. 27 column regarding the Town's possible decision to go \$25 million in debt to finance the construction of three new ice surfaces in Halton Hills.

I spoke at that council meeting in 2000 where that Mold-Masters SportsPlex project was approved. I told that group that we needed at least two more arenas just to meet the needs of our community at the time, let alone the further growth that has occurred.

I know that most of the arena user groups numbers have skyrocketed since 2002, when Mold-Masters SportsPlex was finished. The Georgetown Minor Hockey Association has gone from 70 teams to 130 teams in that time, and have had to accommodate them in the same facility times we had then. We could have limited our enrolment but we chose to register as many kids as we could to allow them to play.

In all of the ice and floor users groups in Halton Hills, there are more than 4,600 people per week using our arena facilities. That is not really 8% of the town's population, because with parents, etc., there are usually two extra people for every participant using the facility. It is actually more than 25% of the population that uses the arenas each week, and I believe this is more use by the citizens by far than any other municipal facility.

We have more people per capita using arena facilities than anywhere in the GTA.

We are having trouble keeping volunteers, who are



Funding Faceoff

becoming increasingly frustrated by the lack of facilities available to them to teach the kids in their care.

The arena users have waited patiently in line while other community projects, some very deserving, were funded.

I urge council to approve the budget for all three proposed arena facilities. To do otherwise is a clear signal to the citizens of Halton Hills that they can live here, but they can't play here.

*Dr. Ron Lefebvre,
VP of House League, GMHA*

I feel that while the arenas are certainly a tax money issue we should be supporting our youths' activities.

We are, after all a community, and community encompasses ALL of us.

Senior citizens get certain breaks (taxi chits and other things) and well they should. There are things that my taxes pay for that have nothing to do with us but we pay willingly, because this is OUR COMMUNITY.

The more sedentary our youth become the higher the rate of diabetes, heart disease etc. and therefore stresses the already stressed health care

system.

There also is the issue of keeping our youth busy and participating in productive activities.

Robin Bannon, Georgetown

I believe that what you consider "the silent majority" that do not want to build new arenas in Halton Hills is in actuality a minority, and that many, many more Halton Hills taxpayers understand that:

- Memorial Arena should have been replaced long ago and is costing too much to maintain

- Many registrants in town hockey and ice sports are not receiving adequate ice time for development or play

- Many children (and adults) in town do not play ice hockey or other ice sports due to a lack of ice and either go elsewhere or resign themselves to other activities

- The longer we wait to develop arenas the higher the cost will be when we/if we do decide to build

- We have been asking for more arenas for a very long time and the mayor and council seems to be turning a deaf ear to public requests and even for past requests from

private groups asking to build facilities

- And finally that most do not want to "attack you personally", and respectfully couldn't care less about your personal details.

Drew Riedstra, Halton Hills

I and my family strongly support the construction of these badly needed facilities.

I was shocked to find when my son started playing hockey in Georgetown that the house league kids get an average of one practice every three weeks over the course of the season. In addition, because of the shortage of ice, the practices are often at 6 a.m. on school days, which for many parents, is difficult to impossible to make. For kids in Atom (ages 9 and 10) they have games for half of their season Saturdays at 6, 6:15, 7, and 7:15 a.m. These are also pretty tough time slots for kids of that age.

My men's league has similar timing problems, playing half of our games very late on weekday evenings.

In these times where kids have so many other distractions it is hard enough to keep kids physically active. A shortage of ice compounds that difficulty in an age where childhood obesity is becoming a chronic concern.

While none of us like paying higher taxes, I am more than willing to do so when the need is worthwhile.

My preference would be for a specific arena tax surcharge rather than a general rise in the tax mill rate, as this would make it transparent and could then be eliminated when the debt is retired.

Tom Keenleyside, Norval

•••
While the current situation, driving out of town for ice use is not ideal, we have dealt with it and will continue to do so, because these surfaces will not likely come on line until after at least one if not both of my boys have stopped playing.

In 2000/2001 the Ontario Minor Hockey Association had 108,912 registered players of all ages and levels. In 2009/2010 there were 101,641 and has been in steady decline the last three seasons and according to the OMHA are down yet again this season. I am not suggesting that the registrations are down in Halton Hills organizations, however do we really need three new ice pads?

While the costs may not be directed at the various user groups through increased registration costs etc, all of our taxes will go up, which ultimately will effect the bottom line of my household income, so robbing Peter to pay Paul does not get me any further ahead.

I hope that the town is seriously considering if we are solving tomorrow's issues or today's because the numbers would indicate that registration is declining and will likely continue to do so, especially if building the new ice surfaces takes away from the discretionary income every family hopes it has.

So to council, please make sure that we really need these ice surfaces tomorrow before you undertake the debt.

Greg Ferguson, Acton

More letters page 15

YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO RETIRE.

But not too young to plan.



LIKE A GOOD NEIGHBOUR



STATE FARM IS THERE.®

Providing Insurance and Financial Services

Make sure your retirement savings always keep working for you. We can help with RRSPs and more. Get started now by giving one of us a call today.



Mike Francis, Agent
123 Main Street South
Georgetown
905-877-9652
www.mikefrancis.ca



Phil Karda Ins Agcy Ltd
Phil Karda, Agent
174 Guelph Street
Georgetown
905-873-1833
www.philkarda.com



Lora Greene CIP CFP, Agent
211 Guelph Street, Unit 6
Georgetown
905-873-1615
www.loragreene.ca