

OP ED

"Op Ed" — old time newspaper term meaning the page opposite the editorial page. This page has traditionally been held open for opinion pieces, letters, and comment from various sources.

Parents shut out of hockey

Dear Editor
Re: Hurricanes shut out of Georgetown

Most winter nights a group of dedicated Georgetown parents and grandparents will journey off into the darkness to another town or village in Halton so that their kids can practice or play AAA hockey.

The players vary in age from 8 to 17 and were chosen for their hockey talent to represent the AAA Halton Hurricane teams. They would prefer, however, to play and showcase their skills in front of local friends and relatives in Georgetown.

Incredible as this may seem, they are, in effect, banned from playing hockey in their own town - even occasionally. Hurricane parents are appalled that those who control minor hockey here are letting it happen. They are asking for a simple explanation for this transparent injustice.

Local businesses such as restaurants, service stations, sport stores and even the arena snack bars, who will lose the 7 month revenue potential should demand a satisfactory response too.

The situation is so bizarre that we want to share our frustration with those not involved with local hockey. Georgetown's well earned reputation as a minor hockey hotbed is in jeopardy.

To provide some background, when Georgetown agreed, three or four years ago, to join the Halton Hurricane AAA Alliance, one of the objectives was to increase the quality of hockey within the current system. This meant that young hockey players could progress through house leagues, rep, AA, etc. to AAA level.

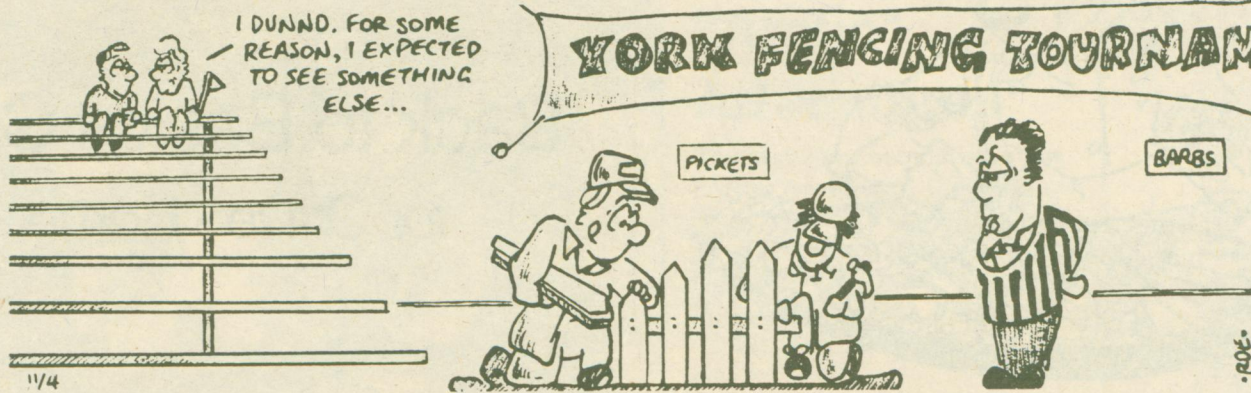
Initially, when this was introduced, some rep teams were weakened when the competitive players moved to the Hurricane teams - and some people were upset. (But surely that anger is now forgotten). Improvement came by playing top AAA level teams and the results are very impressive. Halton Hurricane teams have triumphantly carried their name (and Georgetown's) to championships and near victory in league and tournament play across Ontario, Quebec and the U.S.A.

Hurricane teams are respected and competitive with all leagues including the top MTHL teams. The quality objective has been accomplished.

Since 28 Georgetown kids make

For Pete's Sake

by Roe



up nearly 25% of the players on Halton Hurricane teams, it would appear reasonable for Georgetown to provide approximately the same ratio of available ice time.

Guess again folks. One would also think the Hurricane operation would be encouraged, supported and greeted with great enthusiasm here since they are waving the Georgetown/Halton name far and wide. Perception is not reality, however.

This winter, of the estimated 2000 hours of available minor hockey ice time between Memorial and Alcott arenas - unbelievably - not a single hour has been given to the 7 Hurricane teams. The GMHA has scored a perfect shut out.

Is this not only preposterous but peculiar?

For example, two years ago the Hurricanes were given 17 hours per week among all teams. That seemed fair. Last year they had 12 hours; this season the Hurricanes were told perhaps 12 hours again; then informed (in writing) 5, and finally were given none!

This confusing, delaying process has consumed more than two months, caused game and practice schedule turmoil and finally, in desperation, forced the "promised" Georgetown allotment of ice time to move to Erin and Hillsburg. Erin, which has a tiny player representation, has kindly contributed more than their share of ice to help the Hurricanes. We applaud their sense of community spirit.

The Hurricanes don't require prime ice time - local house league/rep teams should naturally have priority - but even throwing us some "token" ice would have helped us understand. The local Hurricane kids who started in hockey here are the ones being penalized.

Their parents donated time, energy, ideas and money over the years to the GMHA and still attend fund-raising events. They are caring and active people; should they continue to invest their support if the payout is zero?

What kind of system can create a situation which dictates that certain

young hockey talent in a town be selectively omitted (it would appear) from their own rinks?

One of the reasons given for lack of ice time is that minor hockey registration is up - despite a cross Canada decline in enrollment.

Has anyone, who is independent of the GMHA been exposed to the data which support this?

There are other questions and concerns. Is weekend ice time currently still available and not being used? Are out of town industrial teams utilizing ice time at Georgetown rinks? Do some GMHA teams have fewer players than required for a normal team - and still have full practice/playing privileges?

How can the apparent barrier facing the Hurricanes in Georgetown be dismantled? Are conflicting philosophies or personalities at work here? Is the GMHA executive really making decisions which benefit the kids? Is there a hidden agenda? Who is ultimately responsible for the actions of the GMHA?

In conclusion, why should a group of tax paying Georgetown parents, who happen to have sons with hockey ability, be excluded from their community arenas?

These kids should be proudly praised, not blatantly banished. As well, in a tough economy, we don't think it's wise to eliminate the potential store traffic in Georgetown provided by Hurricane parents and fans from the Orangeville, Milton, Erin, Hillsburg, Waterdown, and Flamboro.

They believe it's a joke. We think it's sad: has anyone a logical explanation?

We don't.

Sincerely
Reg Finlayson

(On behalf of concerned Hurricane parents.)

c.c. Tom Shepherd, Director of Recreation and Parks
Bill Robson, Town Councillor
Russel Miller, Mayor
Bill Blight, Chairperson, Hurricane Alliance
Hal Pells, President GMHA

Parliament Hill report

Garth Turner MP
Halton Peel

During the referendum campaign I was often asked what would happen after the vote was finished. And my response was that I hoped Ottawa would focus all its attention on economic issues - managing the debt, stimulating the economy, making taxes fairer and helping people get jobs.

A few days ago in Ottawa we started that process. And one of my first suggestions to Finance Minister Don Mazankowski was to cut more government spending and lower the rate of the GST.

This made front page news in the Toronto Star, much to my surprise. And last Friday the Star even made a point of commenting on my suggesting more cuts to the government, as a way of financing that tax cut.

The other night on television I debated some economics professor who said the feds should open the spending floodgates and forget about the country's mounting debt, or even trying to have tax revenues balanced with the money Ottawa collects.

Meanwhile there are people who wonder why the GST hasn't reduced the deficit, and believe all that cash is being squandered away on needless spending.

So, obviously it's time for an accounting, and a review of this controversial tax.

The GST replaced the MST (manufacturer's sales tax) which in 1989 collected more than \$17 billion. This year the GST will collect just \$15 billion, for a net loss to the government of \$2 billion. Why is that?

It's because the GST is a tax on consumption and in a recession, consumption falls. So, the tax take also falls. This, in part, is why I supported this tax - because it is based on the health of the economy. I also voted for it because it removed the old tax on manufactured goods, making our exports more competitive. That's one reason our exports are surging higher

right now.

Until the GST revenue catches up to what the MST used to raise, there's no extra money to use for the deficit. But that should come as the economy recovers. In fact, we've even passed a law making it illegal to use extra GST money for anything but reducing the deficit.

So, what would I change? My position has been the same for three years - slash the rate of the GST, broaden the base so there are no exceptions to it, and force the provinces to combine their sales taxes with the GST while at the same time reducing those rates.

This would do a few good things. Lower sales taxes might help encourage people to buy things and get some unemployed workers back on the job. A combined federal and provincial tax would be easier and cheaper for businesses to collect - less red tape and fewer hassles. And a single tax would require just one set of bureaucrats to collect it, instead of the two we have now. So, less cost to government, less burden on taxpayers.

The economy might grow as a result. Government would be streamlined. Business owners could concentrate on sales instead of filling out forms. And the sales tax would be fairer, without the crazy patchwork of exemptions and deferrals we have now.

That hardly seems radical. It just seems common sense. And it is just one of the recommendations I am making to Mazankowski as he prepares a major plan on the economy to be revealed next month.

I'd like to hear some other suggestions - specifics on spending cuts, for example, or ideas on how government priorities can be changed to help the economy. If you'd like to be a part of this process, please drop me a line: Garth Turner, MP, 27 Main St.S., Georgetown L7G 3G2.

Laurie Burns'
Activity Line returns next week

Have your Children's BIRTHDAY PARTY at ACTON BOWLING LANES call 853-0470

GLENLEA
Drug Mart LTD.
FAX SERVICE 853-1855
ATTENTION: Bottle water users Distilled water available
CHECK OUR PRICES!
294 QUEEN ST. E. ACTON, ONT. 853-2220

We'll Meet Your Travel Needs
TWG TRAVEL INC.
48 MAIN ST., S Georgetown 877-2252
IATA

Carl's Catering Company
~ Catering Since 1959 ~
NOW OFFERING Our NEW Limousine Service ... '56 Rolls Royce & New Lincoln Stretch
Brampton 457-2813
Georgetown 873-2277

THE CARPET BARN
DIVISION OF HALTON FLOOR FASHIONS LTD.
877-9896
877-1666
26 Guelph Street Georgetown, Ont.