

Acton Arena 'rumor mill' irks councillor

Dismayed by an escalating rumor mill, Acton Councillor Norm Elliott wants to set the record straight about the fate of the old Acton Arena in Prospect Park.

"I'm not being disloyal to Acton, but it's time to knock this ridiculous rumor mill on its backside," Elliott said.

The Town of Halton Hills has not yet made a decision on whether to demolish the building, he said at Monday's general committee meeting. In August, to establish what the costs of demolition would be, the town began a tendering process which will close Oct. 8. A decision whether to demolish the 70-year-old building won't occur until after a report on the tendering comes back to council in late October.

At that time, a report is also expected from a sub-committee of Heritage Acton, a non-profit group with a record of saving historical buildings in the community, studying the possibility of saving the building.

"There has been no statement of this council that the town is going to proceed with demolition without a full analysis of the project issues and the request from the (Acton) Agricultural Society and Heritage Acton to examine the feasibility of perhaps saving the building," Elliott said.

Petitions are currently circulating in the community to save the old arena, but Elliott is concerned by the impression of many that saving the building includes saving the ice surface.

Acton councillors, Elliott, Rick Bonnette and Clark Somerville, are committed to working with committees of Heritage Acton and Acton Agriculture Society to examine saving the arena in some form, or perhaps building a new smaller structure for the Society, said Elliott. But that does not include an ice surface.

Elliott decried being "accosted" on the streets by constituents complaining Acton councillors have "sold out" the community by not supporting a

second ice surface in that town. He said there is a misconception by many residents that "outsiders" were bumping Acton teams from ice time at the new \$5.2 million Acton arena.

No group from outside of Halton Hills will be using the new arena ice surface, during the regular winter season, said Paul Stover, acting director of Recreation and Parks. However, Acton residents requested the ice surface begin operation earlier than the usual October 1 opening and to make that financially viable, the town had to rent the ice surface to whoever wanted it — in the pre-season only. In this case, a Milton group rented some time.

Bonnette said all Acton user groups met this year and worked out an ice schedule at the new arena. He also added he has spoken to some Heritage Acton members who told him that they have no intention of saving the ice surface at the old arena — at least in the foreseeable future.

—By Cynthia Gamble, staff writer

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