

## Letters



# School playground part of Acton's assests

To the Editor:

I spoke as the President of Acton Soccer Club at the press conference announcing the proposed sale of MSB land. The Club is the largest external user of the fields at MSB. I hoped to find some insight in the comments by the local trustee that would surely follow the reaction to this bad decision, but there was none. This letter represents my personal views: it has not been approved by the executive of the Club.

I remain astonished that our trustee could agree that these lands could be declared surplus. As I recall, he was inducted into the Halton Hills Sporting Hall of Fame last year, thanks to his valuable leadership of the Aqua Ducks. That organization relies on access to the swimming pool at MSB for its existence: in all his years of going to the pool, did he never notice hundreds of children (in brightly coloured soccer clothing) playing on the fields next to the swimming pool most evenings, Saturdays and Sundays? Does he not remember the furore surrounding the last time this was proposed?

The planning of capital assets in the education system is clearly a broken process. As Mike O'Leary has pointed out, it has taken 15 or 20 years for the board to notice that Speyside School is surplus (and it is), yet the actively-used MSB fields are in the same category in their minds! In the long term, we need much better capital management in the school boards:

taxpayers deserve it.

The fields at MSB are a central piece of Acton's recreational parkland. Acton's sporting groups make use of these lands for the good of all, and the Soccer Club relies on the fields for about 50% of all the games and practices. I think user groups would understand if the fields were to be lost to a school expansion, but to eliminate all other options by selling the land is a bad decision for every reason.

Our community has recently benefited from the foresight of the Town's Parks and Recreation Department, with the excellent addition of parks at Wallace Street, Tanners Drive, Rennie Street, and the gorgeous Acton Sports Park. Citizens have supported recreational projects: the Acton Agricultural Society built a building for the Fall Fair, and made it available for community use the rest of the year. Citizens contributions have provided the Three Musketeers skateboard park on Tanners Drive. And many volunteer charity bingo hours provided the \$150,000 that facilitated the fields and landscaping at Acton Sports Park.

This is a time when we should be celebrating the good. HDSB needs to rethink their short-sighted proposal and to consider the fact that the educational institutions are part of the community's assets, whether they like that idea or not.

Ian M Watson  
Acton

# Mike was bang-on

To the editor,

Kudos to Mike O'Leary for some very well said comments in Thursday's Tanner about the potential sale of the MSB lands. His comments about the board's actions (or, rather, inactions) leading to the neglect of Speyside school are bang on. Perhaps the MSB property wouldn't be in jeopardy if the board hadn't allowed Speyside to fall into ruin before slating it for sale.

Mike points out that in private business, this type of gross mismanagement would "cause heads to roll." It absolutely would. Unfortunately in the case of the board, that won't happen. Everyone responsible will wash their hands of this and insist selling MSB is "necessary" to fund their other projects.

That is sickening. What a sad lesson for the children of our community to have to learn - money is more important than people.

Sara Hodge



Players in Photo From top left: Coach Mr. Christopher Braun, Mike Kovacevic, Garrett Nuttall, Victor Thompson, Dave Carscadden, Jesse Check, Coach John Locke, (bottom row) Travis Kayler, Jason Field, Malcolm Stanley, Tris Hannah, Luke Van Dinther. - Submitted photo

# My memories of MSB field

There is a lot of talk in town about the school board declared surplus land at McKenzie-Smith Bennett School. Before it's over, it is going to get interesting to say the least.

Being a born and raised Actonite, the land, or shall I say, the memories of the land, mean a lot to me. Those memories mean more to me than any money the board could raise by its sale.

McKenzie-Smith Bennett or MSB as it is known is not its name for me. The schools will always be M.Z. Bennett Public School and McKenzie-Smith Middle School. For those who are a bit older than me, McKenzie-Smith Middle School may always be Acton High School before the new one was opened in 1979. The public and middle schools so graciously named after longtime Acton principals and vice principals.

There never seemed to be a school night or a summer vacation day that was not spent doing something at M.Z. Bennett. Since we lived so close to the school, it was a favourite haunt for me and neighbourhood friends.

We would play tennis between the two buildings that are now joined, hoping that when we hit the



By  
Angela Tyler

tennis ball too hard it wouldn't end up on the roof.

The wind would blow through our hair as we sped on our bicycles as fast as we could so we could reach the former playground. Then we would try to make it the full way across the monkey bars you could hang from without falling to the sand below.

One overly warm weeknight just before dark, my friend from across the road and I tried to escape to the playground without her brother. Of course, as always, he was in tow. Before we knew it he decided it was time he climbed up the pyramid, made from oil soaked railway ties, which now would never make it to a playground. Suddenly he was inside of the pyramid and couldn't get out.

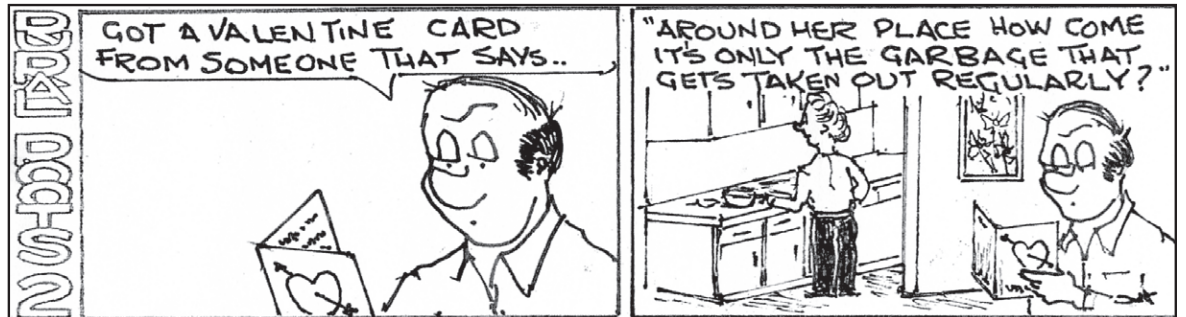
Another quick bicycle ride back to her house to retrieve her father, we were soon there watching her brother being yelled at by their dad in Ukrainian. We won't even talk about the time riding back from the playground when he knocked his

bicycle into mine and threw me into the curb. My elbow still has the scars to remind me.

There were school playdays every spring in the field. Everyone looked forward to it. Maybe I did more than my friends as playdays were the only days me sister and I were allowed to wear shorts to school. My father always told us shorts were for the beach; not for school.

Fall days were filled with track and field practice and gym classes found us trying to understand the game of softball or maybe even taking a swing at a golf ball with a golf club. In the winter, classes were going skating on the ice rink in the field. I have a scar on my bottom lip from that memory. A rowdy boy with a hockey stick and a misunderstanding. He thought the girl pretending to be a world class figure skater had his hockey puck. Hardly a week goes by I don't think of that hockey stick coming down and slicing my lip open.

I suppose for some, it is surplus land. However, I believe, it is far more than that. It is memories of the past and a place where children and families will have memories for the future.



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