

Community upset over sale of MSB land

Can't believe it's happened

To the editor,

I am writing to express my anger and frustration along with those expressed by Acton Soccer Club President Ian Watson and Town of Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette over the Halton District School Board's decision to sell off some of the land at McKenzie-Smith Bennett School.

I truly cannot believe this is happening. Mr. Watson is correct when he states the MSB fields have been used by the club for over 40 years as I was part of some of the first groups of children to have joined the soccer club in 1969 and played as a member of the club for more than 20 years and played on the very space that is being deemed surplus.

For the past five years I have again been associated with the Soccer Club as a coach and now watch my children as well as countless others enjoying themselves on the same space.

As a child I attended M.Z Bennett and was part of the first graduating grade 8 class of the newly formed McKenzie-Smith Middle School. I have enjoyed the winter ice rink annually prepared on the fields by the Town both as a child and as an adult. I have seen the children from MSB on soccer nights pulling carts and wagons selling freezies and water to raise money to rebuild the playground, as the HDSB would not pay for it, for the kids of the school and the community at large.

Over the years I have witnessed the Acton Pool built into the school, the hallway to connect the two former schools together in the now amalgamated one, the local YMCA using the school and property for their programs and the

fenced daycare playground and most recently the Acton HUB centre built on the south end.

The main field in 2007 also brought about my resurrection as a player in the now infamous Coaches versus Referees game which sparked the Gerry Hattricks league for older players to again enjoy the game and the fields.

The fields also provide an element of security for children and parents as they are so open, you can't help but see what's coming. That security would be gone if houses were to be built there.

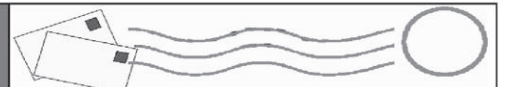
Where does the school get the idea that these lands are surplus? They seem to serve a very useful service to me. Where has the HDSB been when for the past 10 years or so Speyside School has sat empty? This may be one of deemed surplus lands now and why now in a depressed real estate market when they could have sold those school grounds two years ago in a more viable market.

If the proposed MSB land sale goes through the HDSB will come to regret that decision. Years from now some sort of change or addition or whatever will need to be made to MSB and the land will not be there, and then what will happen. The HDSB will tell everyone they will need to buy another property and build another school costing us taxpayers even more money in the end when everything they need is right there right now.

If they want surplus they may want to look within their own walls at the HDSB building but the fields at MSB are far from SURPLUS.

Greg Maltby
Acton

Letters



MSB is not for sale

To the editor,

As a lifetime resident of Acton and living across from the school fields, I feel I must voice my disappointment with the HDSB and our trustee who voted to sell off "surplus land for development."

Who does Mr. Ockenden represent? No one I've talked to. Apparently he can "live with" selling 3-5 acres of the MSB field for housing. Does Acton need more houses?

I guess he won't miss the open space that is so often used all year: school activities, dog walking,

soccer, baseball, skating, etc. Will he "live with" the increased traffic congestion - it can be a challenge now to exit from your own laneway at times.

What about the lack of recreation areas for our young people? Have we just given up on them playing outside at all anymore? Isn't child inactivity / obesity a concern?

Acton High School now utilizes these fields as their own area is limited. What about future expansion at MSB? Will we have to purchase other

lands at a huge cost in the future? Any money that is taken in from the sale of this land will be gone so fast and to other areas. But the open play fields will be lost forever.

Mayor Rick Bonnette and councillors are fighting this as they did in 2000. Please show them your support. Hopefully our trustee will work to get the MSB fields off the list of surplus lands and this will be the end of this once and for all.

Thank you.
Keith Porty
Acton

Not in Acton's interests

Déjà vu, Here we go again.

What's changed from nine years ago over the same fight?

Nine years ago we had a mayor for the sale of the land. Different story this time. Our present mayor is opposed, but our very own school trustee is for the sale. Shame on him, suggesting the town buy it. How many times does one taxpayer need to pay for school property? According to the Halton School board they would have

us buy it back, when we bought it the first time in the late '50s. Now because of their mismanagement they want us to fork over more money!! That hasn't changed.

The fact Mr. Cullen still is trying to put this property up for sale hasn't changed either.

The so-called 15 acres which I believe almost seven of these acres is the actual school building and parking lot leaves approximately eight acres left. Consider this was two sep-

arate schools at one time, The Acton District High school and MSB Public School. That leaves four acres each, until a glorified hallway was put in to join the schools. It was not to effect the status of the school property, but clearly has, at least on paper.

The School Board's actions are unjustified, decision making not in the best interests of the students.

Still fighting mad nine years later,
Kathy Verbeek

Redesignate the land

To the editor,

...and I hope Gerry Ockenden is listening.

How can we let this happen? As the mayor said, "we bought this property once...we're not buying it again." I say that council redesignates the property to open space so that no one could build on the property! That way the school could never sell it to developers. If the HDSB says it's surplus, then give it back to the people who bought it originally, the Town and the taxpayers. The money from the sale wouldn't even be used in town anyway, I'm sure.

Prepared to SIT IN to stop this craziness,
Brian Blackwood

Only one thing will be cleaner than the engine:

Your LUNGS!

THE DRIVEN TO QUIT CHALLENGE

Quit Smoking for the month of March and you could **WIN** a hybrid.

Ditch your cigarettes for a new car and enjoy a healthier lifestyle. Quit smoking for the month of March and you could win a 2009 Chevrolet Malibu hybrid, one of two vacation getaways or one of seven regional prizes. Get all the motivation and support you'll need to succeed through The Driven to Quit Challenge and the Canadian Cancer Society Smokers' Helpline. Call 1 877 513-5333.

Hosted by: Canadian Cancer Society / Société canadienne du cancer

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The Driven to Quit Challenge is presented in collaboration with your local public health department. All prizes made possible through the generous support of McNeil Consumer Healthcare.

Must be an Ontario resident over 19 years of age. Selected entrants must consent to urine test to confirm non-smoking. Skill-testing question required



A SIGN OF THE TIMES: Signs such as this one out front of Home Hardware are showing up everywhere as the community continues to protest against the selling of MSB land. -Marie Shadbolt photo