

'Never enough ice time' in Markham

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facilities. But do you keep adding more facilities and add to your deficit? You have to look at the political ramifications.

The situation in Markham is no different, notes Bill Jefferson, Markham Minor Hockey Association president.

"There's never enough ice time. Everybody gets bigger all of the time — men's hockey, boy's hockey, women's hockey, figure skating," he said.

To meet the growing demand for ice time, tournament organiz-

ers have been forced to use private playing facilities in bordering areas like the Scarborough Ice Palace or the Beatrice Ice Gardens at York University.

Going to these places, Jefferson says, is a political hassle and an expensive proposition.

"When we go there we always have trouble," Jefferson said. "And to rent ice at these places is expensive. You're talking over \$200 an hour."

Other communities may soon follow Newmarket's lead in using private sector ice rinks.

"It wouldn't take away from

town ice," Parkinson insisted. "Private rinks would definitely take the pressure off minor groups. It would free up a lot of ice time."

"Men's leagues would like private arenas and those facilities make their money with adult groups through meals served and a bar," she pointed out.

Councillor Nick Papa, chairperson of the parks and recreation culture committee for the Town of Richmond Hill, has no objections to private-run facilities, providing they make sense.

Ice availability is not the only recreation concern. The crisis for

more recreational facilities carries over to pools and outdoor facilities.

Stan Pagonis, president of Richmond Hill Phoenix Baseball, would like to see the politicians view minor sports organizations as more than just user groups. He feels the town should follow the lead of Mississauga.

"(Mississauga Mayor) Hazel McCallion looks at sports groups as a service for the community that adds to the quality of life," Pagonis said.

"Here, we're viewed as just a user group."

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New council must act: sports leaders

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tation. We'll have to put a plan together to see whether there will be more ball diamonds, soccer fields, tennis courts, a band shell or whatever."

The major user groups of the town's recreational facilities are concerned about the future as the election campaign unfolds.

Whitchurch-Stouffville Soccer Club president Victor Szabo says his club is making an information package available to its members so they can discuss with candidates the facilities needed by the fast-growing club. "I'd like to question the candidates to see where they stand," said Szabo.

He calls the election a good time to raise public


awareness of the club, whose membership is expected to more than double over the next seven years.

"We can show our package to the new council and ask them if they're going to do something. Our needs are very real and the time is now."

Don Easter, third vice-president of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Hockey Association, said it's essential the new council look to the future needs of all recreational facility users.

"The second ice pad and the pool are behind us now. But the facilities we have now aren't going to meet our needs five or six years down the road."

"We're already practising at five and six in the morning at the arena."




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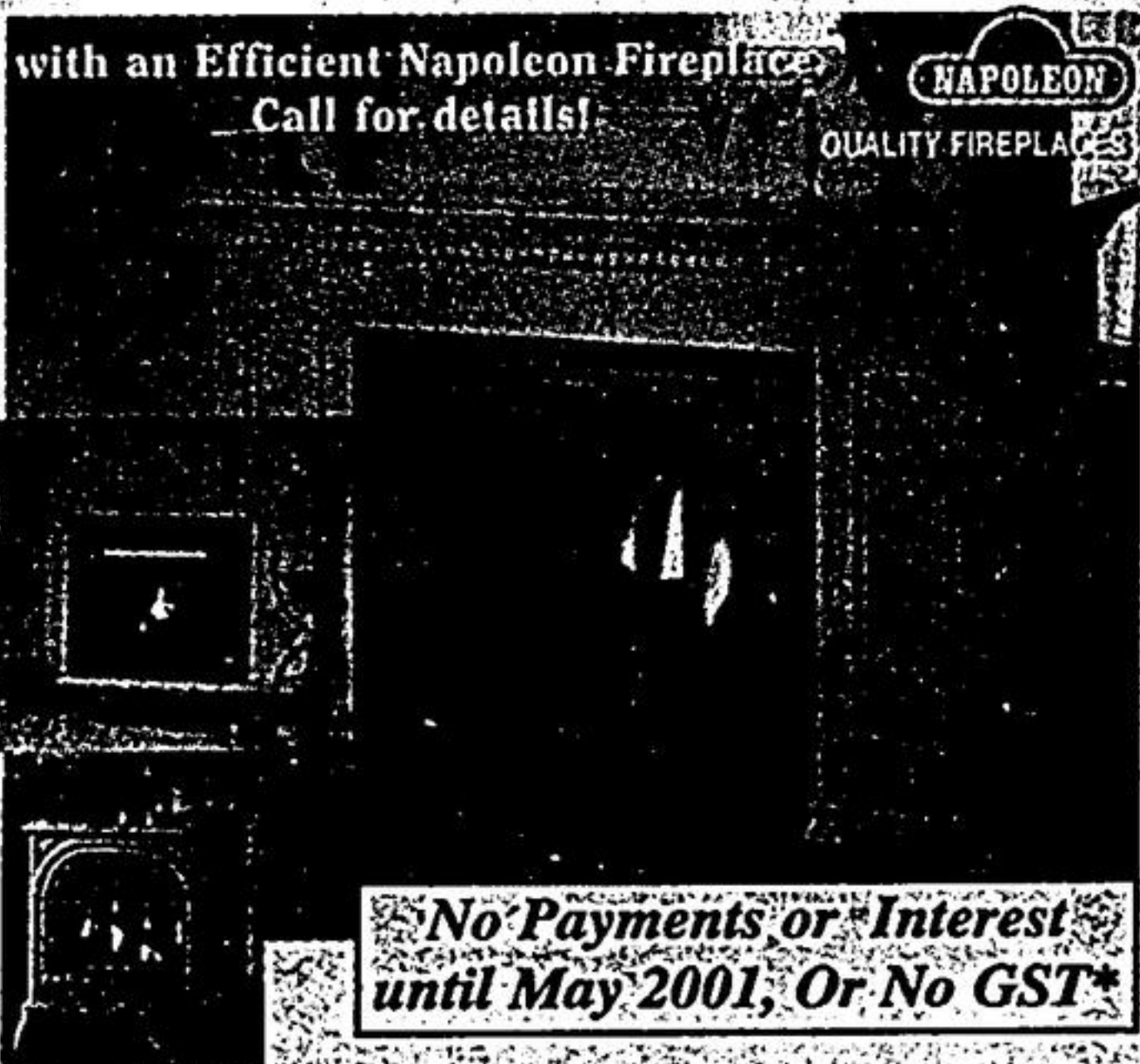
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