

# Too few arenas, too many costs for minor hockey

As good as growth has been for hockey in York Region, problems have arisen.

Most notably, the availability of playing facilities to accommodate growing numbers.

Stouffville minor hockey president Joe Cornacchia said a new facility to complement the fully booked twin-pad Stouffville Arena is needed. He intends to bring this issue up with next month.

"Right now we have no extra ice time and we have to cap our enrolment numbers.

"If the numbers keep going up, we anticipate a waiting list of up to 400 within the next four to five years. We're stretching our resources now," he said.

In Aurora, president Joe Bentolila said they will be able to combat increasing enrolment with the twin-pad rink in the Wellington and Leslie streets area that will open in September.

In Newmarket, a four-pad arena is expected to open next year on Mulock Drive.

Another concern is spiralling costs.

"Unfortunately, it's pretty pricey with ice costs, player insurance. It's right up there," Mr. Bentolila said. "For rep kids, they have to pay for tournaments, rep fees and there's fundraising. Each kid spends around \$3,000.

Mr. Cornacchia thinks municipal politicians should take this into consideration.

"Most municipalities want to go with a user fee policy. They want user groups to pay for ice allocation. We have a real problem with that because we pay our taxes and we expect certain services," he said.

"In hockey, to provide an arena is something we should expect. In Stouffville, we get 20-per cent subsidy on ice rates. We think, because we're providing a service and being a volunteer organ-



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Michael Ang (left) president of Markham Minor Hockey and Joe Cornacchia, president of Whitchurch-Stouffville Minor Hockey Association at Angus Glen Community Centre.

ization, there should be something to look after the kids," he said.

In Markham, minor hockey president Michael Ang anticipates ice rates could increase by around \$20 an hour next year.

"That doesn't help," he said. "Hockey is one of the most expensive sports to play. What we need to do in Markham is to encourage new immigrants who come to live in the area and get their youngsters into hockey."

Mr. Cornacchia said if a viable agreement could be worked out between minor hockey associations and municipalities, it would be a win-win situation.

"If you provide services to keep kids in sports, you don't have problems with vandalism or kids hanging out in malls. We've got to keep kids busy and physically fit. We must keep them in organized sports, period," he said

—Mike Hayakawa

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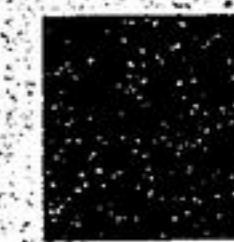


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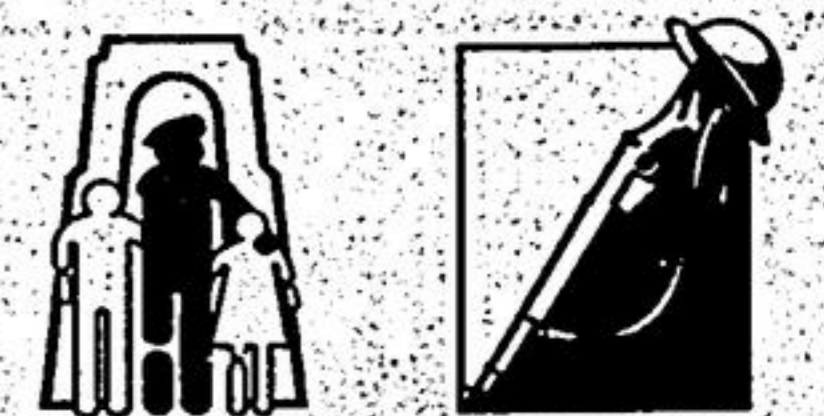
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