

Putting the brakes on proposed hockey merger

First and foremost, we would like to thank the executive for everything that they have done so far with respect to the merger of our rep programs. We understand the tireless efforts that have been put forward by everyone involved, and the countless hours it has taken to get us to this point. It does not go unappreciated, and I know all of SMHA commends the work that has been done so far. Thank you.

We met only three months. We were under the impression that this merger process would take a while, and would give us the needed time to think about it while the details were ironed out. A year, three years, maybe. Yet here we are, finalizing this deal, and deciding on the future of our life-long community establishment a mere three months later. Again, the work that has been to expedite this process is appreciated by all.

But what's the rush?

Sixty years ago the Schomberg community came together to tirelessly raise money for a rink, and the original arena was born ? a staple in the town. Hockey shaped the community for the next 60 years. Then five years ago we did it again ? the Trisan Centre arrived. Another monument to the importance of hockey to this community.

We are steeped in pride and dedication to our community and its members. Why should the hard work and fundraising efforts by SMHA, curling club, Lions and figure skating go to bettering another organization? Who from NobleKing Minor Hockey ever volunteered to help us with our arena, or our programs in general?

The OMHA is not pushing us, or any other CC centres to merge. If they are, it's for all the wrong reasons ? money, and convenience. Dozens of centres across the province are not nearly close enough to neighbouring towns to make merging of centres feasible. There will always be CC centres for us to play. And that is the beauty of playing for the Red Wings ? playing teams from all across Ontario. That's true hometown hockey.

We lose players each year to AAA. That will always happen, and the best players should be encouraged to realize their goals by playing at the highest level. If Schomberg maintains the regular season A status, then our players will stay. We have lost players to NobleKing because we were playing in A. If we stay in A, we will keep our product intact. We are already seeing that at multiple levels.

CC hockey provides very high level playoff hockey, as a lot of centres our size do not have AAA hockey close to them. Good players stay where they are. And rivalries are born! Schomberg has enjoyed successful playdowns for several years. It gets the whole community involved. Why do we need minor and major teams, when there is no hitting until bantam now anyway? The OMHA is changing, but we don't have to.

We have a fantastic volunteer base here that keeps our membership costs down. Our ice scheduler, OMHA representative, and snack bar staff all work for no pay. They do it because they love doing it.

NobleKing has paid staff. Where does this money come from? Higher membership fees.

Our fundraising campaigns work to better the entire organization, while NobleKing teams are all expected to raise team funds. Every team for themselves is not the motto of Schomberg Minor Hockey.

The sport is already expensive enough and cost-prohibitive for many families. With higher fees, hockey will become even more unaffordable. With local league having no borders, and losing our rink of the rep program, people will leave to more affordable home ice. Tottenham, Beeton and Bradford are all closer than driving to King City. And it would be cheaper to play. Our local league will suffer, which was the whole point of this ? to keep Schomberg hockey in Schomberg, where it belongs.

Each association is to have its own local league board, as well as a new King hockey board. We struggle as it is to get volunteers for our own association, let alone a whole new group to run the King program. It is most likely the core volunteers who will have to do double duty on both boards.

NobleKing has wanted to merge for as long as we can all remember. They always will. The opportunity to merge will always be there. And now we have a framework to do it, if we so choose.

But not now. How can we think we will be more successful than we are already? Our countless banners hang high in the arena with pride. All of our staff are volunteers, who do it because they love the game. They love the Red Wings. They love Schomberg. The Red Wings will suffer if we merge.

We can all say that the Red Wings will still exist, but the reality is they won't. Not in the same capacity that we have for years. The pride, and community feel, will be lost in time. We have survived, and have been successful for all these years. With a smaller rink, with less money, with less registration. So why now?

There are a lot of unanswered questions. The most important is what's the rush?

Please attend the meeting on Feb. 21 to cast your vote. The future depends on it.

A Concerned Red Wings Family