

Aurora Sports Hall of Fame Board of Governors expels inaugural inductee Frank Stronach

The Aurora Sports Hall of Fame Board of Governors revoked Frank Stronach's Induction and cut ties with the convicted billionaire in a vote taken on Thursday.

Stronach was enshrined in the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame in 2013 as a member of the organization's inaugural group of eight inductees. The community sports advocate was inducted as a builder and contributor along with Alpine Skier Brian Stemmler, Olympic Equestrian Jim Elder, NCAA and Olympic Basketball star Carolyn "Cal" Bouchard, and Canadian Tennis legend Robert Bedard. Three other inaugural inductees - Softball Coach Norm Stunden, Builder/Contributor Peter Miller, and four-time Stanley Cup-winning goaltender Harry "Hap" Holmes - were enshrined posthumously.

According to ASHoF's Media Release, Stronach had been offered the opportunity to voluntarily resign both his membership in the Corporation and his status as an Honoured Member by midnight on July 8.

When the Board received no response from Stronach after issuing the request on July 3, ASHoF decision-makers enacted his expulsion in keeping with its community standards of behavior and a binding agreement with the Town of Aurora which contains a morality clause.

Consequently, the Board of Governors voted to terminate his lifetime voting membership in the Corporation and revoke his status as an Honoured Member of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame.

ASHoF President and Chair Javed Khan and the Board were faced with a precedent-setting scenario in that no Inductee has been expelled in the organization's 13-year history.

"It was quite a difficult decision. We went through this kind of test for the first time. We followed our by-laws, procedures, and processes to protect the integrity of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame."

When asked if the members of the Board felt conflicted between Stronach as a generous community builder and Stronach's recent conviction, Khan said, "There were no differing opinions. It was very clear what we had to do and we followed processes as any organization would. We're in a democracy and everyone deserves a trial to determine innocence or guilt. After the verdict was delivered in court, we followed our democratic processes, too."

The long-time President and Chair delineated the step-by-step process by which Stronach's enshrinement was erased from the various manifestations of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame: "We also changed our contact point from SARC (Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex) to ARC in cooperation with the Town of Aurora."

In ASHOF's Media Release on Friday, the reason for Stronach's expulsion was delivered: "Following the criminal convictions of Mr. Frank Stronach under the Criminal Code of Canada, the Board of Governors of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame has determined that these convictions are fundamentally inconsistent with the values, principles, and standards our organization exists to represent. . . Our actions today are not intended to erase history. They are intended to protect the future of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame and ensure that the values we celebrate remain consistent with the values our community expects us to uphold. This decision was reached only after extensive governance review, consultation with legal counsel, and thoughtful deliberation with our Board of Governors."

ASHoF's precedent-setting decision to expel Stronach was reinforced by its partnership with the Town.

"Equally important, the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame is a party to a Funding Agreement with the Town of Aurora that contains a Morality Clause. That agreement requires our organization to conduct itself in a manner that protects and does not negatively affect

the reputation of the Town of Aurora. . . .We recognize that some members of our community wished these actions could have occurred more quickly, and we understand and respect those perspectives. However, our responsibility as stewards of this institution is to ensure every decision is made responsibly, fairly, and in accordance with our governing documents, our legal obligations, and the principles upon which this organization was founded. . . .Together, we share a commitment to fostering a community built upon dignity, respect, accountability, and safety for all.?

By Jim StewartLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter