

Charles Bronfman hopes for Expos return; calls Big Owe 'a concrete monster'



Mike Cohen

There are so many remarkable things about Charles Bronfman, but whenever his name is mentioned I always harken back to the 22 years he served as chairman and principal owner of the Montreal Expos.

Next Monday evening, June 29, Bronfman will be inducted into the Alex Dworkin Montreal Jewish Sports Hall of Fame at the YM-YWHA along with Dr. Tina Kader, Joseph Kibur, David Zilberman and the 1956-57 Snowdon

Blues basketball team. Bronfman sold the Expos to a local consortium run by Claude Brochu in 1990. He is closely watching the efforts to bring the franchise back to town.

"I would certainly be pleased if the Expos returned to Montreal," Bronfman shared when I reached him last week. "They would do well if there was a convertible roof on a 35,000 seat stadium in downtown Montreal. Will that happen? Two things will determine that. As I see no further expansion, a team would have to be willing to move to Montreal and Major League Baseball would have to approve that move. As you know, clubs have threatened to go elsewhere, but normally that's been a ploy to obtain a better rental or financing arrangement with the local authorities!"



Stephen and Charles Bronfman at the opening of Federation CJA's annual Combined Jewish Appeal Campaign, 2014.

Bronfman laments the franchise's departure to Washington a decade ago. "Yes, I was sad," he said, "but I wasn't surprised. I well recall that when we didn't win in 1981, that was the beginning of the attendance decline. A few years later, we had young, go go players who gave their all, and were exciting to watch. Yet we'd have 8,000 people in the Big Owe! You know, baseball is a pastoral sport, and to play the game in a concrete monster like that is and was an insult to the game, the fans, and ownership."

Bronfman is naturally very proud of his son Stephen, whom I first met when he worked with the late Jim Fanning on some community relations projects for the Expos. "I was five in 1969 when the Expos arrived," Stephen told me. "I grew up with baseball. It was a great highlight of

my life and I was the biggest Expos fan alive!"

Stephen Bronfman was actually part of the Expos ownership group in 1999 headed by the much reviled Jeffrey Loria, the carpetbagger who wins the prize hands down for killing pro ball in this city. "The Loria era was a horror show for us all," Stephen recalls. "I was really too young to take on the general partner role at that time and had to watch as Loria methodically grounded us all down. He saw a dysfunctional partnership and I believe never had any interest from day one to keep the team here. He did his homework and put together his own plan that did not include Montreal."

Stephen believes there is a lot of momentum a foot for baseball's return here. "The mayor is really gung ho, as are many Montrealers and Quebecers," he said. "I would be happy to help and would love to be able to take my kids to baseball games as our dads did with us."

The Hall of Fame event is being chaired by Harvey Wolfe and will see dignitaries and heads of industry together with avid supporters of Jewish Sport — all get together for a VIP Cocktail at the YM-YWHA, followed by a Dinaoire at the Gelber Centre on Côte Ste. Catherine. Please see my expanded column in *The Suburban Magazine*, online Friday afternoon.

Have something to share? E-mail me at mcohen@thesuburban.com or leave a message at 514-484-9203, ext. 307. Follow me on Twitter @mikecohen1 and at <http://blog.thesuburban.com>

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CSLer warns of citizenship call scam

By Joel Goldenberg
The Suburban

A Côte St. Luc resident wants to warn other residents of fake calls purporting to be from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC).

The resident, who did not want to be identified and has been a Canadian citizen for 58 years, told *The Suburban* she recently received a call from a person claiming to be a CIC representative.

The resident was asked if she was born in Canada, and was then told because she did not send in a particular form, she would be

picked up at her apartment building in 30 minutes and placed in a holding cell. The resident then told her building security not to let anyone in. She also checked the caller ID and it appeared to be that of CIC. The resident said she was not asked for any money, and she wanted to warn others, especially those who could be badly affected by stress.

Nancy Caron, a CIC spokesperson, told *The Suburban* that there have been increasing reports in the last six months of a "cross-Canada telephone scam where

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