

BELINDA STRONACH

UN group honours Stronach

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Aurora's most prominent woman has been honoured by the United Nations for her work supporting gender equality.

Belinda Stronach accepted the United Nations Women Canada National Committee Award at The Rideau Club in Ottawa Monday.

She received the award for her efforts to help build a better life for women and girls at home and abroad.

"Empowering girls and women is a no-brainer to me," she said. "We are innovative, competitive, possess the drive and ambition to get the job done. Girls and women don't want charity; they want investment and opportunity."

During the ceremony, which pays homage annually to a Canadian who exemplifies the committee's commitment to gender equality, the former cabinet minister was lauded by host Justin Trudeau and others for her work on gender and humanitarian issues.

Her efforts with the Belinda Stronach Foundation were among the items specifically mentioned. The foundation funds numerous projects that support women and girls.

The former Magna CEO said she is inspired by the charitable efforts of others, including a number of delegates from last year's G(irls)20 Summit, who went on to help build mobile libraries in slums and create bursaries to ensure girls can attend school in poverty-stricken regions.

Ms Stronach, 45, added she was proud to receive an award from a body she respects so much.

"I was honoured to be chosen as someone who represents their mission to empower girls and women at home and beyond our borders" she said.

Foundation executive director Farah Mohamed said Ms Stronach believes in the potential of women and girls.

"Belinda is a mother, a businesswoman, a politician and a philanthropist," she said. "These are great qualities on their own, but when brought together, they are explosive. She combines all these qualities in order to benefit others."

Some of her achievements include co-founding a campaign with Rick Mercer called Spread the Net, which focused on eradicating malaria and serving on the boards of the Centre for Global Development and the Millennium Promise Canada.

One of the projects her foundation spearheaded was a campaign to deliver 5,000 laptops to children ages six to 12 in aboriginal communities across Canada.