

OPINION & EDITORIALS



The CENTRAL NEWSPAPER

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With FIFA World Cup 2026 Underway in Toronto

As Toronto welcomes the world for FIFA World Cup 2026, members of the Steve & Sally Family Foundation are encouraging media outlets to shine a spotlight on a remarkable local figure whose contributions helped shape the city's soccer story decades before the tournament arrived: Steve Stavro.

Long celebrated as one of Toronto's most influential business and community leaders, Stavro is widely remembered for his impact on retail, philanthropy and professional sports. Less recognized, however, is his role as an early champion of soccer in Canada and as the owner of Toronto City, where he helped elevate the game at a time when few envisioned Toronto as an international soccer destination.

In 1961, the Eastern Canada Professional Soccer League was formed, a four-team league with representation from Hamilton, Montreal, and two Toronto teams, the Toronto Italia and Toronto City, a brand-new endeavour under the auspices of George Gross and Steve Stavro. To elevate the profile of professional soccer in Toronto, Stavro and Gross travelled to the United Kingdom and recruited several international stars for their new team Toronto City, including Scottish captain Tommy Younger, England captain Johnny Haynes, Northern Ireland captain Danny Blanchflower, and legendary Sir Stanley Matthews. Their efforts brought world-class talent and high-profile exhibition matches to Toronto, helping establish the city as an emerging centre for the sport in Canada.

In June 1961 a Globe and Mail journalist dubbed Stavro the 'merchant of soccer' for the same 'burning enthusiasm and indomitable optimism' that made him a grocery magnate.

These events gave local fans a rare opportunity to experience world-class soccer firsthand and helped demonstrate that Toronto could support and embrace the global game. Long before Toronto FC, sold-out stadiums, and FIFA's decision to bring the World Cup to Toronto, Stavro saw soccer's potential to unite communities and connect the city to the world.

Stavro's commitment to soccer reflected a broader belief in the power of sport to bring together newcomers, families and diverse communities across Toronto. His efforts came at a pivotal time, when much of Canada's soccer culture was being built by immigrant communities who viewed the game as a vital connection to their heritage and identity.

As a result of his contributions, Steve was honoured as a life member of the Canadian Soccer Association and was also inducted into the Canadian Soccer Hall of Fame in 2005 as an "honoured builder" of the sport.

As FIFA 2026 shines an international spotlight on the city, the Steve & Sally Stavro Family Foundation hopes Torontonians will also remember one of the early visionaries who helped lay the foundation for this moment and whose belief in Toronto's soccer future came decades before the world took notice. One-on-one interview opportunities are available with Elaine Stavro, Director, The Steve & Sally Stavro Family Foundation.

THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN... DEAT RISE

The number of children killed in conflict soared to at least 6,266 in 2025, up about 34% from 2024, with the increased use of high-tech explosive weapons driving the trend, said Save the Children. The latest United Nations Annual Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict showed a record 24,174 children had their rights violated in conflict last year, the highest number since the protection of Children in Armed Conflict (CAAC) mandate was established 30 years ago [2]. These numbers represent the tip of the iceberg for grave violations against children, as most attacks on children go unverified, said Save the Children. The number of children maimed in conflict rose by nearly 10% to 7,958 in 2025, continuing a steady trend of increasing child casualties in conflict since 2020.

Many of these deaths and injuries are linked to unmanned aerial systems, drone-enabled and remotely operated attacks, and AI-supported target selection, all of which pose grave new risks to children's lives and safety in conflict zones, said Save the Children. Once exclusive to advanced militaries, drones are now cheap, commercially available, and deployable by any armed actor, making them the small arms of this era.

Notably, for the first time since the establishment of the CAAC mandate, government forces were the main perpetrators of grave violations against children. Governments around the world are not only failing to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect children in conflict zones, they are doing so with near-total impunity, said Save the Children.

The highest numbers of grave violations were verified in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel (12,445), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (4,114) and Nigeria (2,560).

According to the UN report, the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel saw the sharpest rise in violations verified in 2025, up over 45% from 2024 [2]. Of these, 9,465 violations were attributed to Israeli armed and security forces who were responsible for the highest number of verified violations globally in 2025. The violations perpetrated by the Israeli armed and security forces include 5,946 incidents of denial of humanitarian access, 2,760 cases of maiming, and 828 attacks on schools and hospitals.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, cases of children killed or maimed in conflict more than doubled from 438 in 2024 to 918 children in 2025 and cases of sexual violence nearly doubled from 358 to 592 children in 2025. This reflected a deteriorating security situation in a country battling multiple humanitarian crises.

Danny Glenwright, Save the Children President and CEO, said:

"Wars are being waged in a fundamentally different way to 30 years ago when the CAAC mandate was established. Around the world, Save the Children is watching drone strikes hit the places children gather: kindergartens, schools, hospitals, maternity wards, markets, and displacement camps. Children's smaller bodies, developing organs, and lower harm thresholds mean they are disproportionately killed and maimed by these weapons, and the psychological toll of living under constant drone threat compound that harm for years after the attack.

"More damning still is the fact that for the first time in 30 years, government forces were the main perpetrators of grave violations against children. No longer can shadowy 'armed groups' be scapegoated for the killing and maiming of children in war. It's governments making the choices they know will cost children their lives – with a complete disdain and disregard for international law.

"We know that drones and other tech-enabled weapons can be deployed covertly, across borders, and without combatants present, making attribution and accountability exceptionally difficult—compounding the ongoing erosion of norms designed to protect civilians.

"With States responsible for much of this harm, it is for States to act and stop the bloodshed of children. Governments must uphold the rules that govern conflict, especially when it comes to protecting children, who are always the most vulnerable. Canada has both a legal obligation and a moral duty to speak out against those who harm children in war, and to prioritize children's rights and well-being as it reviews its foreign policy for the current geopolitical context. And just as importantly, there is a responsibility to invest in the programmes that protect them, care for them, and help them rebuild their lives. Because ultimately, the future of millions of children depends on the choices we make today—and on whether we act with urgency and resolve. Canada's legacy of standing up for children's rights is more important than ever."

Letters To The Editor:

WHAT IS ON YOUR MIND? Send letters to newspaper@ocentral.com

Dear Editor:

Kids used to use their own track in the bush behind this area, but the City didn't like that, and closed it. After the complaints came in, they announced they would build a BMX track, which they did, I don't remember if it took one or 2 years to build. I think it was open for one summer.. Then they closed it, for a couple of years to build the rest of the park around it. Now its closed again. I understand the bird nest issue, but maybe the kids could go back to the original path in the bush before they get old enough for university?

Doug Raine

Dear Editor:

Dear Minister Jones,

We are writing to ask that you stop LifeLabs/Quest from sending Ontario patients laboratory specimens to Quest's reference laboratories in the United States and restore our public hospital outpatient laboratories. As you know, in August 2024, Quest completed its acquisition of LifeLabs. Since then, Quest, an American multinational, has been attempting to cut back services to Ontario's patients. In Sudbury, they attempted to close their laboratory processing facility entirely and have now reduced its staffing by half. From January to March, they cancelled afternoon hours at the Kenora lab collection centre. Currently, they are beginning to move lab tests that are done in Ontario's hospitals to the United States.

For decades, these reference laboratory tests have been performed in Ontario's hospitals. Shifting them to the United States raises serious patient privacy and specimen quality concerns, delays results, harms the efficiency and independence of Ontario's medical laboratory system, transfers more Ontario health care dollars to the United States and reduces income to our hospitals.

On March 9, 2026, LifeLabs/Quest informed "external laboratories" that reference laboratory tests will be transitioned to Quest Diagnostics. What they call "external laboratories" are Ontario's public hospital medical laboratories that have been routinely used for many years by LifeLabs to test samples from Ontario patients that LifeLabs did not have the ability to process. Quest's reference laboratories are all in the United States. Quest's March 9 memo states that phase one of this transfer of tests to the United States will begin on April 6 with phases two and three following in the period May to July of this year.

Quest's actions will:

- reduce the protection of Ontario patients' medical data;
- take financial resources away from hospitals;
- make Ontario's medical laboratory processing system less efficient by removing needed volume;

- send more Ontario tax dollars to the United States, and;
- jeopardize sample quality by increasing transportation and turnaround time and by making it harder for Ontario hospital patients to access needed reference tests.

In our view, these actions by Quest demonstrate a lack of concern about delivering high quality medical laboratory services in Ontario. Maximizing corporate income by bleeding income from Ontario's health care system and patients should not be the driving force of our medical laboratory system. Quest's contract to provide outpatient medical laboratory services in Ontario must be cancelled as soon as possible and your government must restore all outpatient lab testing to the control of local public hospitals.

Transferring the community laboratory work to the hospitals will make a more integrated health system and ensure public – and Canadian domestic -- control over these vital services. It will be cheaper, provide better quality and faster care, strengthen the services within the local hospitals and increase accessibility for patients to needed health services.

Please provide us (and the public) with all contracts between the Ontario government and

Quest/LifeLabs.

Ross Sutherland
Chair

Natalie Mehra
Executive Director

Dear Editor:

I am a senior. My property taxes are 8,000 a year. I lived all my life an honest hard working man. Raised a family the best I could. Today, I am faced with loosing my home. I turned to my local council member and they never returned my call.

I went to City Hall and I was told that if I could not afford my home to sell it. I was shocked. How dare... Instead she told me that the process for failure to pay taxes is long. Some comfort. No wonder there are so many people living on the streets.

What is happening to our Canada. I am over 65 and I am working two jobs. My pension does not cover anything. We give billions to fight foreign wars and we can't invest in some sort of fund to help those at home.

I am disgusted. I can understand why our society is going to the dogs. People have lost their sense of civil duty and responsibility.

I may not have accomplished anything by writing this letter. But I feel better and hope that someone out there reads this and takes it to heart.

Stu St.Patricks
Oshawa.

Dear Editor:

Hello Mr. Ingino,

I want to share a story about this RNA but I don't have her formal consent yet. I was so moved after she left, and when I tried to call the company, I was told she would be in Wednesday. The young RNA doesn't know I wrote this. She was so humble. It was I that mentioned the incident and coincidentally she was the one who helped the child before the first responders arrived. If you feel this is a human interest story that your newspaper promotes, here is her info if your reporters want to reach out to her directly.

Her name is: Grace Nicholson (not related to the politician)

Sincerely,
Connie Rosario

SEND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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or

mail to 136 Simcoe St. North Suite 4 Oshawa