

## STAR EXCLUSIVE

# Fail rates set for driver test centres

Brampton, Downsview have highest failure 'norms,' while chance of passing G2 exam best in Kenora

DANIEL DALE  
STAFF WRITER

About half of the drivers who take their road tests in busy Brampton fail. In sleepy Kenora, the failure rate is lower than 20 per cent.

As Ontario's driving instructors have long known, some examination centres fail a far higher percentage of test-takers than others. Now the company that runs driver testing for the province has set out

of pass-fail "norms" for each DriveTest centre based on their widely varying pass-rates.

At the Etobicoke centre, for example, examiners who conduct the road test required to obtain a G2 licence have been given a failure-rate norm of 53 per cent, the highest in Ontario. Conversely, examiners in Odessa have been given a

norm of 30 per cent. Kenora received the lowest norm, 7 per cent. The failure-rate norms, obtained via Freedom of Information request, vary within the GTA. The norm is 52 per cent in Downsview, 43 per cent in Mississauga, 40 per cent in Aurora and 36 per cent in Burlington.

RATES continued on A12

**BRAMPTON 53%**  
**HAMILTON 38%**  
**OSHAWA 36%**  
**KENORA 7%**

\* G2 fail-rate norms

## IS IT COLD IN HERE, OR IS IT JUST ME?



BOB WAGNER/TORONTO STAR

Baby Hartford, 14 months, can't talk yet, but he knows how to tell mom Laura Berg he's feeling chilly, using clenched fists and a shiver. Parents are increasingly turning to sign language to help their babies communicate long before they are able to say their first words. Story, E1

## Access to court exhibits is ruled a public right

Far-reaching decision changes rules for media

TRACEY TYLER  
LEGAL STAFF WRITER

The Ontario Court of Appeal has knocked down a long-standing barrier to full public access to the courts, ruling that the CBC could see and make copies of exhibits in the Ashley Smith case, including a videotape of the teen's dying moments in a Kitchener prison cell.

Court exhibits have traditionally been guarded like state secrets in Ontario's justice system, and reporters were routinely denied access

Correctional Service of Canada argued that an open justice system merely entitles the public and media to attend court and report on what is said, not access to exhibits filed in a case.

Writing for a 3-0 appeal panel Monday, Justice Robert Sharpe squarely rejected that argument, saying the open court principle and the media's right to access judicial proceedings "must extend to anything that has been made part of the record."

Access to exhibits can now be denied only if there is convincing evidence it would cause a serious risk to the administration of justice and

## Now praying at a theatre near you

Pastor moves church to Cineplex in leap of faith

CAROLA VYHNAN  
LIVING ARTS/ARTS REPORTER

Praise the Lord and pass the popcorn.

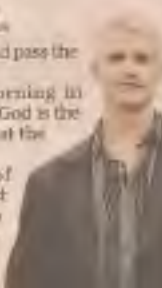
It's Sunday morning in Downsview and God is the feature attraction at the Cineplex Odeon.

The faithful of Crosspoint Baptist Church sink into red plush seats where, just hours earlier, congrega-

tion-in-a-hat that sets up in a cinema.

It's a heaven-sent solution — yes, God directed him to do this, says Vincent — for a growing number of Christian groups looking for both new members and affordable access to a high-tech, multimedia platform.

"The big screen is the 21st-century version of the stained-



## STAR INVESTIGATION

# Conviction tossed out over 'police brutality'

Appeal judge rips watchdog's probe of assault complaint

## ABOVE THE LAW

SIXTH IN A SERIES PROBING POLICE CONDUCT IN ONTARIO

MICHELLE HENRY  
AND DAVID BRUSER  
STAFF REPORTERS

As Quang Hong Tran sat handcuffed to a chair in an interrogation room, Const. WEL Vander Wier sucker-punched him, breaching his jaw in two places.

The provincial Special Investigations Unit (SIU) cleared the Peel Region police officer and Tran was subsequently convicted of conspiracy in a 2006 robbery.

But the seven-year-old case was turned on its head last spring when the Court of Appeal for Ontario threw out Tran's conviction because, in the words of Justice Glenn Epstein, the Peel officers "beat him up" and "attempted to cover up their shocking conduct by destroying evidence, lying to fellow officers and perjuring themselves before the court."

The court's ruling in June outlined a flawed justice system in the Tran case — from the SIU to the prosecutor's office — that allowed Const. Vander Wier to go unpunished.

The ruling prompted the SIU to reopen the case. Vander Wier was later charged with assault.

His case is before the courts.

SIU continued on A10

## HOTTEST TOYS

The Star was there as 20 children tested the 100 hottest toys for Christmas at the Canadian Toy Association's annual showcase on Monday. A sneak peek at the

## 'THREE LITTLE HEARTS'

Céline Dion reveals she and René Angélil briefly had triplets, E3



## PLAY TIME

Classic toys with a twist are a hit with kids at showcase, E7



## TELEVISION

## Sanders set has best of the best

17-disc DVD collection showcases creator/star Garry Shandling's wit



ROB SALEM

I said for *Larry Sanders*, we might have missed out on some of the best of the best of TV. And without Show! Factory, we might have missed out on the rest of the best of *Larry Sanders*.

Like many beloved DVD releases, music clearances have prevented the bulk of *The Larry Sanders Show* from being released on video — aside from a trial first-season set and a 2007 22-episode "Not Just the Best of" collection.

That changes Tuesday with the much-anticipated and long-overdue arrival of a new 17-disc DVD set containing all 89 *Sanders* episodes, along with commentaries, deleted scenes, all-star interviews and a making-of documentary.

It's just the latest must-have set from the inextinguishable video vaults of Show!, which already run the gamut from *Mr. Ed to Dragnet*.

You want to talk talent? Writer/producers Peter Tolan (*Rescue Me*), Jacki Apslow (*Arrested Development*) and very likely the last three feature comedies you saw) and Steve Levitan (*Modern Family*), actors Jeffrey Tambor (also *Arrested Development*), Jeremy Piven, Sarah Silverman, Bob Odenkirk (*Breaking Bad*), Janeane Garofalo, Mary Lynn Rajskub and Penny Johnson (all on 24), Wallace Langham (*CSI*), Scott Thompson (fresh off *Kids in the Hall*), Rip Torn (*30 Rock*)...

In fact, *30 Rock* itself. And Piven's *Entourage*. And *The Office* (and that includes the Binky Gervais



SICK MAGGIONI/TORONTO STAR

Laura Berg teaches son Hartford, 14 months, to sign as daughter Finesse, 5, plays past in the background. Berg, a former teacher, turned to sign language when Finesse was a baby.

## LANGUAGE

## Signs of the times

Eager parents use sign language to teach babies to talk before they can utter a word

TRISH CRAWFORD  
A PARENT WRITER

When Hartford Berg wants milk he opens and closes his hand, as if he's milking a cow.

The 14-month-old touches his fingertips together to show he wants more of something and grips his hands tightly in front of him and shakes like he is shivering to say he's cold.

Hartford has a few spoken words, including *cheese*, *dog*, *duck*, *cat*, *mom* and *dad*.

But when words fail, he turns to a modified version of American Sign Language, originally developed for those who are deaf.

*As Talk to Your Baby Before Your Baby Can Talk* into bestsellers.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recently endorsed sign language in its material for new parents, saying, "Infant sign language really does deliver on its promise of improved communication." The Canadian Pediatric Society hasn't taken a position on sign language, but society president Dr. Robert Hilliard says he applauds anything that helps children communicate, especially those with hearing or learning difficulties.

Jeanne Davis found her skills with baby sign language helpful when she adopted her son, then 14 months, from a Russian orphanage three years ago. He was "totally non-verbal," says Davis. But within four hours he was able to show the sign for "more" to ask for more crackers. This told Davis he had a good attention

## BOOKS

## Writers' Trust kicks off prize season

Giller and GG awards follow in three weeks of literary love-ins

VIT WAGNER  
PUBLISHERS REPORTER

The Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize has long been considered the bronze medal in Canada's literary Olympics.

The award, first given out in 1957, can't match the glitz and glamour of the nationally televised Scribner-Letter Prize and it can't glow like

started, 74-year history of the Governor General's Literary Awards.

But this year, at least, the Writers' Trust award enjoys the distinction of being the first out of the box. To be awarded Tuesday in Toronto, it will be followed on Nov. 9 by the bestowal of the Giller Prize and on Nov. 16 by the announcement of the GG awards. It is the first time in the three years since the Writers' Trust moved its award from spring to fall that it has had the privilege of starting the conversation.

"We've actually had an unprecedented amount of press coverage for our awards this year," said Writers' Trust of Canada executive director Dan Ormrod. "Darryl Stouck is old saying that when the clock runs in, all boats float. This is a perfect example of that."

The Writers' Trust also awards prizes in other categories, including non-fiction and children's writing, but occupying the same window as the Giller and GG prizes has increased the focus on its fiction award.

The Writers' Trust fiction winner earns the same \$25,000 payday as the GG victor, compared with \$50,000 for the Giller champ.

It doesn't hurt, in terms of drumming up interest, to have a writer nominated for all three prizes, something that has now happened for four years running. This year, Kathleen Winter's debut novel *Annabel* hit the finalists list.