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# SUNDAY STAR

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## Students get scare on QEW

Bus driver charged with drug-impaired driving after Michigan youths endure hair-raising trip

**RAVEENA AULAKH**  
STAFF REPORTER

They came to Toronto for a week-end of fun and excitement. What they got were some terrifying moments — something a group of university students from Michigan won't forget in a hurry.

Shortly before 10 p.m. Friday, after motorists on the eastbound QEW in Mississauga saw a bus weaving erratically through the traffic, making abrupt lane changes, several worried drivers called 911.

At about the same time, the anxious students on board were persuading the bus driver to pull over, and calling 911 themselves.

When police caught up with the bus, it had stopped near the Cawthra Rd. exit. "The students were very concerned, but they were calm," said OPP Const. Emily Skleryk, the first to arrive at the scene.

The driver, Gerald Blazey, 47 of Northville, Mich., was arrested and charged with impaired driving by drug, a criminal offence under the Highway Traffic Act.

"There were obvious signs . . . and concerns," said Skleryk, refusing to elaborate.

Most of the 34 students were between 18 and 22.

This incident, on the heels of the arrest and suspension of a TTC driver accused of impaired driving a week ago, has safety experts demanding tougher regulations for big vehicles, including zero tolerance for impaired drivers and a speed cap of 105 km/h for buses.

IMPAIRED continued on A4



## Top cop salaries draw heat

In an election year, politicians must have courage to question wage spiral, says former budget chief

**BETSY POWELL**  
STAFF REPORTER

Toronto police salaries are spiralling upwards and will only continue to grow unless politicians have the courage to rein them in, says a former city budget chief.

David Soknacki was reacting to the release of 2009 public sector salary disclosures that list 1,329 Toronto police uniform and civilian employees who last year earned more than \$100,000 — a more than 30 per cent increase from the year before.

In 2008, 1,006 employees of the Toronto police service earned more than \$100,000.

Those fattened pay cheques do not include lucrative "paid duty," where off-duty officers, paid by private companies, earn \$60 to \$70 an hour to perform such duties as directing traffic around construction.

"Politically, it's toxic" to question whether the city can afford to pay policing costs, said Soknacki, who left office in 2006.

"When money comes up for police, it's very, very difficult to push back.

"It's difficult to say you're for public safety, you're for having a safe and vibrant city but, at the same time, we can do things better in public safety," he said.

POLICING continued on A6

## SUNSHINE CLUB

Number of employees of Toronto Police Service who earned more than \$100,000:



## 'OBAMACARE' SET TO PASS

In a vote that could define Barack Obama's presidency, the U.S. Democrats believe they have enough support to pass a sweeping overhaul of America's ailing health-care system. The bill would extend coverage to about 32 million Americans now uninsured. **A3**

▶ FULL INDEX PAGE A2

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## Finding hope in a mother's death

Friendship blooms between daughter and woman given her mom's organs

**BARBARA TURNBULL**  
LIVING REPORTER

Though they have never met, they feel like sisters.

Michelle Kennedy, 26, took her mother off life support Nov. 21 after a battle with the flu and an attack that cut off her airway for 14 minutes, leaving her brain dead.

Natalia Ritchie, 30, is a Toronto mother who almost died from cystic fibrosis until she was saved at the last minute by a double lung transplant on Nov. 21.

Kennedy, a mother of one who lives in Barrie, says the minute she read about Ritchie's successful surgery in the *Star*, she sat down at the corner store, newspaper in hand, and sobbed. Because she knew.

TRANSPLANT continued on A4



Michelle Kennedy, left, made the decision to give her mother's lungs to Natalia Ritchie.

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