



**South Central
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Balance approach needed between road safety and aging drivers

THORNHILL, Ont. – Older people represent an increasing proportion of Ontario's population with this trend escalating as baby boomers age. In both Simcoe and Muskoka, the senior population (65+ years of age) is projected to almost double from 14 per cent of residents to 26 per cent by 2030.

Older adults are keeping their driver's licences longer than in past years, and they're driving more kilometres. Many depend on their ability to drive to maintain their independence; studies have shown that losing their ability to drive is associated with participation in fewer out-of-home activities and an increase in depressive symptoms.

Transport Canada figures show that between 1988 and 1998, fatal crashes involving drivers aged 65 and older rose by 6.3 per cent, while the number of crashes in the general population involving fatalities decreased by 28 per cent.

The problem isn't as simple as age but, rather, age-related medical conditions, changing abilities, infrastructure changes and education.

That's why CAA is helping aging drivers and their families "Shift Gears" by presenting seminars across the province including one in Gravenhurst at the Gravenhurst Centennial Centre Oct. 11 from 12:30 to 4 p.m. Pre-registration is recommended with only 200 more spots available. Members and non-members are welcome to attend the free Shifting Gears seminar. To register, call 1-877-588-2088.

The seminar includes information about the rules of the road, Ministry of Transportation requirements for those aged 80 and over, the effects of aging and medication on driving ability, transportation options, community resources, ways to approach someone about giving up their keys and a first-of-its-kind scientifically-proven interactive assessment tool called Roadwise Review.

CAA South Central Ontario is a not-for-profit auto club offering insurance, travel and emergency road services. There are close to 1.8 million CAA members in Ontario and 4.8 million members in Canada.