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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. Significant growth in Windsor's senior population will become more and more evident by the year 2010 at which time the first of the "baby boomers" will be entering the 65 plus age group according to the city's own population statistics.

A new study released by Yale University and the AAA Foundation has found a statistically significant improvement in driving performance among seniors who had completed a driver-training program that included both in-car and classroom training.

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 Windsor at the Giovanni Caboto Club, 2175 Parent Ave, Oct. 18 from 12:30 to 4 p.m. Pre-registration is recommended. 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.

Media are invited to attend the seminars. There will be over 200 seniors in attendance, several guest speakers and representatives from the CAA to speak with.

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.