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NEWS RELEASE

To: Assignment Editors, Reporters and Producers: Transportation, Health, Lifestyle, Seniors Topics

SAFER MOTORING BY OLDER DRIVERS INVOLVES MORE THAN STICKY GAS PEDALS: The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists Offers Solutions for Safe Driving

OTTAWA, (February 18, 2010) – As part of the *National Blueprint for Injury Prevention in Older Drivers*, the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) has released some important new resources for drivers, their families and health care professionals. A series of information brochures and website (www.olderdriversafety.ca) promoting older driver safety were unveiled today at a public forum held at Ottawa's Good Companions Senior Centre.

"Older adults want to maintain their mobility and continue driving for as long as possible," explains Dr. Claudia Von Zweck, Executive Director, CAOT. "To do so safely, they need information on strategies to improve their driving practices in relation to health and age."

CAOT is working closely with a national advisory committee to help older drivers make informed decisions about when it is time to plan their driving retirement, enroll in a driver refreshment course or seek the help of an occupational therapist who can recommend adaptations to their vehicles, for example, making mirror or steering wheel adjustments, common among individuals recovering from a stroke.

The focus of the brochures is on the impacts of normal aging and health conditions on safe driving. The brochures provide useful tips based on scientific analysis of high risk situations and risk-reducing strategies. The website provides occupational therapists, other healthcare professionals, older drivers and their families with the latest information regarding driving screening, assessment and treatment options.

The brochures and website are the result of recommendations contained in the *National Blueprint for Injury Prevention in Older Drivers*, a project launched in February 2009 with partner McGill University and funder the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). The Blueprint provides a framework for steps to be undertaken to address the growing issue of older driver safety in Canada.

"The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists is convinced that through proper testing, assessment and education, older drivers can drive longer and safer," says Dr. von Zweck. "For example, through the development of a "driving retirement plan," an older driver can learn both how to prolong their safe driving practices and what alternative forms of transportation are available to them."

The new brochures are being distributed nationwide for placement in physicians' offices, health care centres and older adult community centres, among other locations. Information packages have also been prepared for federal and provincial politicians.

About the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT)

CAOT is the national non-profit professional organization that represents more than 12,000 occupational therapists. As a professional group, occupational therapists are concerned with promoting health and well-being through occupation, in the workplace at home and recreation. For more information on occupational therapy or to download the *Older Driver Blueprint*, visit www.caot.ca. To find an occupational therapist in your community, visit www.otworks.ca and click on OT Finder.

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