



JANUARY 2024 AFTERWORDS

Newsletter of Active Retired
Members
Chapter 11



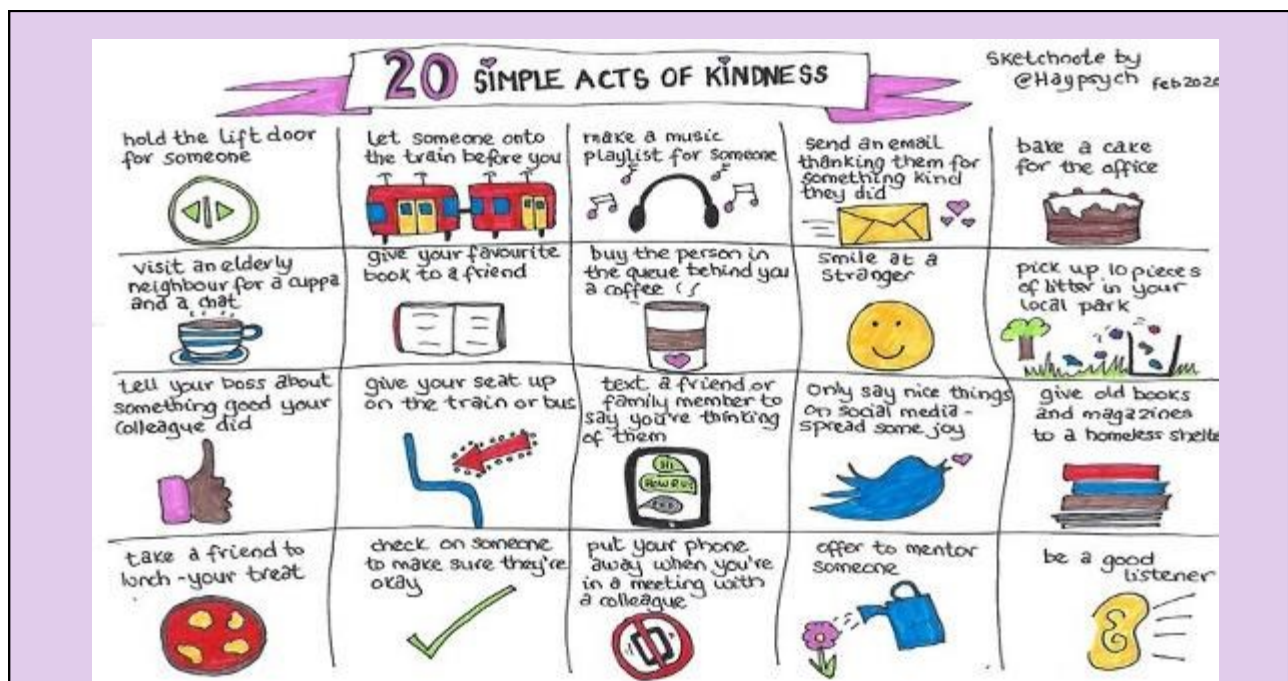
Your editor, Lady Wheezedown, is trying to keep the newsletter briefer, clearer, and the hyperlinks

active so that you can pursue matters vital for information and ideas in our trying times.

Always, I want to hear from YOU with leads to articles, speeches, or statistics vital or personal experiences to share with retired teachers who still carry the torch for clear thinking.

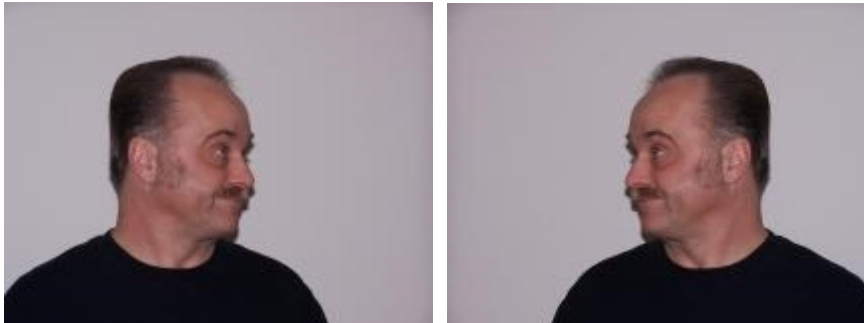
AfterWords is the official publication of the Active Retired Members of OSSTF, Chapter 11 Thames Valley (ARM C11). Opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies of ARM C11 or OSSTF.

- Remember there's another contest in the works. See details on Page 2.
- "Woke"? - my mailbox fills with articles that use this term as a slur. A Canadian professor explains the origin and some useful responses to the term.
- And think it doesn't matter? There are elections coming up everywhere— and recent results in some countries are frightening. See how education and politics make strange bedfellows on Pages 4 and 5.
- Last time I went shopping, the price stickers continued to shock. There are dreadful connections to food insecurity with public health—AND education!
- Ah ... public health and our Medicare. I'm eager to share an academic paper that compares our system to German and US health care.
- And the latest word from OTIP—a terrific cautionary tale about safety and winter heating!.



Another game's afoot, Watson!

Double your pleasure!



"I may be a twin, but I am one of a kind." Jerry Smith, National Football League, Washington.

The Twins Photo Contest!

It is commonly thought that "everyone has a twin somewhere or at some point in time". These twins, unlike biological twins, do not share ancestry. In humans, these twins are often called doubles, doppelgangers, dead ringers, look-alikes, carbon copies, or spitting images.

You're double?

ARM 11 is inviting its members to submit photos of themselves and their doppelgangers between Jan. 1st and Feb. 14th, 2024. Accompanying each set of twins in the photos should also be an account of the circumstances under which you discovered your double.

Prizes! Gift Cards!

Submission Conditions	A Word of Warning
<p>All photos must be submitted between January 1, 2024, and February 14th, 2024, before midnight.</p> <p>Other rules have been previously shared via email from the armpresident@osstf11.com account. Please also consult them.</p>	<p>If you choose to use software to scan the internet for your double, please be aware of the risks inherent with the information these sites ask you to provide and the costs of using them.</p>

In the spirit of the season: Here's what 'woke' means and how to respond to it

Published: December 20, 2023 4:52pm EST



Author [Letitia Meynell](#) Professor of Philosophy, Dalhousie University

A few years ago, [there was considerable anxiety in some quarters about “political correctness,” particularly at universities. Now it’s known as wokeness](#), and even [though the terminology has changed](#), the concerns are much the same.

The goal is to help us all envision and create a more just and peaceful society by talking with each other rather than talking past each other. ...”

“Typically, “wokeness” and “woke ideology” are terms of abuse, used against a variety of practices that, despite their diversity, have a similar character. Often, what is dismissed as “woke” is a new practice that is recommended, requested, enacted or enforced as a replacement for an old one.

These practices range from changing the names of streets, institutions and buildings [to determining who reads to pre-school children in libraries](#) and altering the words we use in polite conversation. When a practice is identified as “woke,” there is an implication that the non-woke practice is better or at least equally good. “

“But for those who disagree with a woke intervention, the right response is not glib dismissal or bombastic accusations of “being cancelled.”

Rather — after a sincere attempt to understand the woke intervenor’s perspective and consider the relevant facts — the right response is a respectful, tempered explanation of why they believe their remarks or actions were neither premised on false claims nor discriminatory. An apology may be in order. After all, at the very least, one has inadvertently insulted someone.

If my analysis is correct, we can now see why the knee-jerk dismissal of something as “woke” is so nasty; it amounts to a self-righteous choice not only to insult or denigrate others but to protect one’s ignorance and support injustice.

Unless we learn to talk with each other rather than past each other, it’s difficult to see how we can ever achieve peace on Earth or truly show our good will to each other.”



DeSantis' 'war on woke' looks a lot like attempts by other countries to deny and rewrite history

Published: July 24, 2023 8.59am EDT

[Rochelle Anne Davis](#) Professor of Cultural Anthropology, Georgetown University

[Eileen Kane](#) Professor of History, Connecticut College

A [Florida law](#) that took effect on July 1, 2023, restricts how educators in the state's public colleges and universities can teach about the racial oppression that African Americans have faced in the United States. Specifically, [SB 266](#) forbids professors to teach that systemic racism is "inherent in the institutions of the United States." Similarly, they cannot teach that it was designed "to maintain social, political and economic inequities."

We are professors who teach the modern history of the [Middle East](#) and [Eastern Europe](#), and we know that even democratically elected governments suppress histories of their own nations that don't fit their ideology. The goal is often to smother a shameful past by casting those who speak of it as unpatriotic. Another goal is to stoke so much fear and anger that citizens welcome state censorship.

We see this playing out in Florida, with SB 266 being the most extreme example in a series of recent [U.S. state bills](#) that critics call "educational gag orders." The tactics that Gov. Ron DeSantis is using to censor the teaching of American history in Florida look a lot like those seen in the illiberal democracies of Israel, Turkey, Russia and Poland.

Here are four ways SB 266 relates to attempts used by modern governments to censor history.

1. Invent a threat

One strategy that DeSantis shares with other world leaders is to invent a threat that taps into anxieties and then declare war against it.

In Russia, President Vladimir Putin has been waging a brutal war against Ukraine in the name of "[denazifying](#)" the country. This claim that Ukraine is a Nazi bastion [is a fabrication](#). Nevertheless, it stokes [real fear and hatred of Nazis](#), whose 1941 invasion of the USSR led to [27 million Soviet deaths](#).

In Turkey, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan [labels critics of state violence "terrorists."](#) More than 146 Turkish academics who signed a 2016 peace petition condemning Turkey's violence against its Kurdish citizens faced trials for "[spreading terrorist propaganda](#)." Ten were convicted and served jail terms before Turkey's Constitutional Court, in a 9-8 decision in 2019, [overturned their convictions](#) because of the violation of their freedom of expression.

In Florida, the phantom threat is "[wokeness](#)," a reference to a term that the [Black Lives Matter movement made mainstream](#). To "stay woke" means to be self-aware and committed to racial justice. Republicans have co-opted the term and use it sarcastically to denigrate progressive ideas and drown out discussions about the reasons for America's [stark racial inequities](#).

2. Criminalize historical discussions

Once a fake threat has been ginned up, world leaders can use it to create new laws to criminalize speech and critical discussions of history.

In Russia, Putin uses so-called "[memory laws](#)" to, among other things, prevent knowledge about the [scale of crimes](#) committed by former Soviet leader Joseph Stalin against the Soviet people from the 1930s to the 1950s. And in 2018, Poland's right-wing leadership added an amendment to one of its own memory laws to defend the "[good name](#)" of Poland and the Polish people against accusations of complicity in the Holocaust. Historians who defy this gag order have [faced harassment](#) and death threats.

Similarly, the Turkish government has a law against "denigrating the Turkish nation" [that makes it a crime](#) to acknowledge the early-20th-century [Armenian genocide](#). [Turkey's purge of its intellectuals](#) resulted in the firing of more than 6,000 university instructors in an effort to silence critical teaching about the nation's past and present.

[SB 266](#), meanwhile, requires general education courses to “provide instruction on the historical background and philosophical foundation of Western civilization and this nation’s historical documents.” It also prohibits general education core courses from “teaching certain topics or presenting information in specified ways.”

The vagueness is deliberate. Teaching virtually anything related to [America’s history of racism](#), particularly as it relates to racial inequalities in the present, could be seen as violating SB 266. Florida professors may refrain, for example, from teaching that [Jim Crow laws](#) were designed to deny African Americans equal rights. These are the same laws that [Hitler used as a model](#) for the Nuremberg Laws that stripped Jewish citizens of Germany of civil rights.



Demonstrators protest Gov. Ron DeSantis’ plan to eliminate AP courses on African American studies in Florida high schools. [Joshua Lott/The Washington Post via Getty Images](#)

3. Punish transgressors

With laws in place that criminalize dissenting interpretations of history, governments can then punish those who violate them. Punishment can involve threatening arrest and imprisoning individuals, and stripping funding from institutions.

For example, in 2011 Israel enacted the [Nakba Law](#), which authorizes the minister of finance to cut funding to institutions that commemorate or acknowledge what Palestinians refer to as the Nakba – or “catastrophe” in Arabic. The [Nakba](#) is the displacement of more than half of the Indigenous Palestinian population and destruction of their communities that resulted from the creation of the state of Israel in 1948.

Likewise, [SB 266](#) defunds diversity, equity and inclusion efforts in public colleges and universities and empowers school administrators and boards to take action against those who defy the rules. It comes in the wake of Florida’s 2022 [“Stop WOKE” law](#) – which restricted discussions about race in K-12 schools and led teachers to [purge their classrooms](#) of books they worried could get them a five-year jail sentence.

4. Write new history

With actual historical events denied or suppressed, governments can then rewrite history to further monopolize truth and impose ideology. Russia offers the most egregious example of this.

In 2021, Putin published a 20-page article, [“On the Historical Unity of the Russians and Ukrainians,”](#) in which he argued that the Ukrainian and Russian people are one and the same. [Alarmed critics](#) rightly saw this as a preemptive justification for escalating his war against Ukraine, which he did with a [full-scale invasion of the country](#) in February 2022

Like [right-wing ideologues in other parts of the world](#), DeSantis claims to be defending U.S. history from falsehoods [pushed by ideologues](#). In his attempts to rewrite history, calls for a reckoning with America’s history of anti-Blackness are [ridiculed as indoctrination](#), and [bigotry gets repackaged as patriotism](#).

If the way governments are rewriting history in other parts of the world is a guide, DeSantis’ and other states’ legislation could be the prelude to an even greater assault on accurate history and freedom of thought.

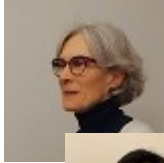


And THIS? Just a poster from Hamilton's October 24th , 2022 , municipal elections ...



Food insecurity in Canada is the worst it's ever been — here's how we can solve it

Published: November 19, 2023 8.00am EST



Authors

[Valerie Tarasuk](#) Professor of Nutritional Sciences, University of Toronto



[Tim Li](#) Research Program Coordinator,

According to the latest Statistics Canada data, household food insecurity in the 10 provinces has reached a record high. Drawing on data from StatCan's Canadian Income Survey, our [new report](#) has found that the percentage of households with inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints rose to 17.8 per cent in 2022 from 15.9 per cent in 2021.

That amounts to 6.9 million Canadians — 1.1 million more than in 2021 — living in households with experiences that range from worrying about running out of food before there's enough money to buy more to not eating at all for entire days because of a lack of income.

One-quarter of food-insecure households were severely food insecure, meaning 1.5 million Canadians had to cut or skip meals over the past 12 months.

These estimates don't include people living in First Nations or the territories — the Northwest Territories, Yukon and Nunavut — [where rates of food insecurity are typically even higher](#).

The rate of household food insecurity differs dramatically across the provinces, ranging from 13.8 per cent in Québec to 22.9 per cent in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2022. Every province experienced an increase from the previous year.

Map of household food insecurity in Canada by province. (PROOF)



From Household Food Insecurity in Canada, 2022 by Li, Fafard St-Germain & Tarasuk, 2023

Health-care system impact

These numbers are important because they tell us about more than just household food situations. By the time someone reports being unable to afford the food they need,

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*If you can't feed a
hundred people,
then feed just one.*

~ Mother Teresa

Living in these circumstances is [very harmful to people's health and well-being](#). The health implications extend beyond poor nutrition and diet-related diseases to a sweeping array of adverse health outcomes, including physical and mental health conditions and [premature death](#).

When we look at the health administration records of Canadians living in food-insecure households, the extraordinary toll food insecurity is taking on individuals and on our health-care system is obvious.

Because their health is worse, people living in these households require more health care. Both [the children](#) and [the adults](#) in food-insecure households are more likely to use outpatient services and to be hospitalized. Once admitted, [they stay in acute care for longer and are more likely to require readmission](#).

The increased use of the health-care system translates to greater health-care costs and an additional burden on our public system that simply isn't necessary.

Evidence-based policy interventions

Reducing food insecurity requires concerted efforts by federal and provincial governments to address the root cause — the inadequacy of household incomes to meet basic needs.

Providing better income support gives households a fighting chance of managing sudden losses of income or increases in expenses without having to compromise necessities.

Studies have shown food insecurity decreases when low-income households receive more money via [child benefits](#) or [social assistance programs](#). That's also the case when households transition to a more adequate and stable source of income — namely, when low-income adults become [eligible for public pensions programs](#), Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement.

However, the way these programs are currently designed means our social safety net is anything but.

Public income supports

Households with limited or no employment income and reliant on provincial social assistance or Employment Insurance are very likely to be food insecure. Relying on social assistance almost guarantees food insecurity; seven in 10 households on social assistance were food insecure in 2022.

In most jurisdictions, social assistance benefits aren't indexed to inflation, so the poorest people in our communities become even poorer as prices rise. Provinces should look to raise and index benefit amounts, asset limits and earning exemptions so that recipients have enough for basic needs while in these programs of last resort.



Households reliant on employment income fare better, but simply having a job isn't enough to prevent food insecurity. In fact, the main source of income for 60 per cent of food-insecure households in the 10 provinces is salaries and wages. The policies meant to support workers in need, like the Canada Worker Benefit and similar provincial benefits, are clearly insufficient.

There's also a need to expand job opportunities and improve the quality and stability of employment through policies like higher employment standards, support for collective bargaining and increased minimum wage, which several provinces are embracing.

Children in food-insecure households

The Canada Child Benefit has been widely credited for reducing child poverty, but this benefit goes to [90 per cent of families in Canada](#). In stretching itself so thin, the benefit isn't providing enough support to the families that really need it.

Just having a child in the household means a higher risk of food insecurity in Canada. In 2022, 1.8 million children — or one in four — under the age of 18 lived in a food-insecure household. Households with children also made up the majority of the increase in food insecurity from 2021 to 2022. The Canada Child Benefit needs to be restructured to insulate lower-income families from food insecurity more effectively.

Governments have failed to implement enduring changes to income policies informed by research on food insecurity. Instead, we've almost exclusively seen small, limited-time benefits, like the federal Grocery Rebate, and [continued funding for community food programs](#) as the response to the hardships Canadians are facing.

The noteworthy exception is the [newly announced Poverty Reduction Plan in Newfoundland and Labrador](#). The existing research suggests that it will help reduce food insecurity in that province.

Food insecurity festers

The prevalence and severity of food insecurity in Canada has likely already worsened since 2022, given continued high inflation — particularly the [record-setting increases in the cost of food, rent and mortgage interest](#) — and a lack of major policy action to offset the added burden on households.

And just in case you were wondering ...

NAME	COMPANY	INDUSTRY	↓ TICKER	BASE SALARY	BONUS
Michael Medline	Empire Company Limited	Consumer Staples	EMP-A-T	\$1,275,774	\$2,679,481
Galen Weston (4)	Loblaw Companies Limited	Consumer Staples	L-T	\$907,200	\$2,661,350
Eric La Flèche	Metro Inc.	Consumer Staples	MRU-T	\$1,034,231	\$1,483,040

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS



GRANT SNIDER FOR EVERNOTE

And I resolve to work harder at protecting and improving our public health care system!

Ah , our health care system—and the criticism it gets. After searching for concise details of how we rank in health care with other OECD countries, I came across an academic paper on public health that demystifies our Canadian system compared to the US and German systems:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3633404/>

A few excerpts:

"Canada has a national health insurance program NHI (a government run health insurance system covering the entire population for a well defined medical benefits package). Health insurance coverage is universal. General taxes finance NHI through a single payer system (only one third-party payer is responsible for paying health care providers for medical services). Consumer co-payments are negligible and physician choice is unlimited. Production of health care services is private; physicians receive payments on a negotiated fee for service and hospitals receive global budget payments (Method used by third party payers to control medical care costs by establishing total expenditure limits for medical services over a specified period of time). Canada's health care system is known as Medicare (the term should not be confused with the Medicare program for the elderly in the U.S.)"

"Critics of the Canadian system must deal with the fact that most Canadians support their version of Medicare. The single most important defense of medical care delivery in Canada is that it works relatively well. Regardless of the problems faced by the system, critics must face the reality that the medical care system provides its residents with access to all "medically necessary hospital and physician services" at a fraction of the per capita cost of the U.S system "

	1998	Canada	Germany	United States
Population (mil.)		30.2	80.2	270.3
GDP per capita		\$ 23,368	\$ 22,951	\$ 30,625
Health care spend. per capita		2,312	2,424	4,178
Health care spend. (% of GDP)		9.5	10.6	13.6
# of physicians (per 1000)		2.1	3.5	2.7
# of hospital beds (per 1000)		4.7	9.3	3.7
Avg. length of stay (days)		8.4	12.0	7.1
CT Scanners (per million)		8.2	17.1	13.7
MRI Units		1.8	6.2	7.6
Lithotriptors		0.5	1.7	2.3



And now, helpful words from the insurers
that take such good care of us!

Turning up the heat: safety tips

There's nothing like a home that's toasty and warm when the temperature starts to drop. But there are precautions to take in order to heat safely. Here are some handy tips to avoid ending up... in hot water.

Heating with wood

There's nothing like the flickering flames and comforting smell of a wood-burning fireplace. But it's important to remain vigilant as poorly installed wood stoves and fireplaces cause countless fires every year.

Ways to heat safely and efficiently:

- Every year, hire a professional chimney sweep to remove any creosote (a by-product of wood combustion), which builds up in chimneys and only a good sweeping can clear away.
- Allow enough air to get in the chimney so fires burn properly. This encourages complete combustion and causes less smoke.
- Firewood and other combustible materials must be stocked at least a metre and a half away from the heating unit.
- Keep logs outside, away from the house, and cover them so they're protected from the elements. Wet wood burns badly and increases the formation of creosote.
- Only burn paper and wood in your fireplace. Anything else could release toxic fumes. Put ashes in a metal container with a raised bottom and keep it outside, away from combustible material, for at least 72 hours.

Is wood burning allowed?

Before getting a new wood-burning heating unit, check that it bears the seal of the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) or the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Units certified by these organizations emit fewer toxic particles and consume up to 20% less fuel than conventional models. Check regulations in your town or province.

Electric heating

Electric heating is the most popular method, but it's still smart to use it prudently.

Some good habits to adopt:

- Before the cold sets in, have your heating system inspected by a professional to ensure it works properly. This can help avoid unpleasant incidents.
- Dust your baseboard heaters carefully and check that nothing's fallen inside.
- Don't put anything on the baseboard heaters (such as damp mittens or socks), as objects in direct contact with the heat source could melt or catch fire.

- For the same reason, window coverings and furniture should be at least 10 cm from the heaters.
- You can buy wire curtain protectors—available at hardware stores and home renovation centres—that fit over the units and keep drapes clear, so they don't overheat.
- Avoid getting paint on baseboard heaters, as it can crack and catch fire.

Precautions for space heaters

- Plug the unit directly into a wall outlet—avoid using an extension cord.
- Place the portable space heater out of reach of children and pets.
- Don't leave a working space heater unattended.

Heating with oil or gas

Do you have a furnace, boiler, or fireplace? Here are some important points to watch out for.

Maintenance is key:

- Get your heating system inspected every year, whether you have a furnace, boiler, or fireplace. Preventative maintenance carried out by a certified expert will give you peace of mind, as you'll know everything is in good working order.
- Give your heating unit enough clearance to ensure adequate ventilation. Air intakes and exhaust outlets must be kept clear to ensure the gases can circulate freely.
- Avoid covering the controls, air intakes, and exhaust outlets.
- Keep children away from the heating unit and ensure they don't touch the valves or controls.
- Clean or replace your heating unit filter in the fall, and clear snow from the exterior components in the winter.
- Is your unit making a funny sound? Call an expert in to inspect it. Remember that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!

Do you have a gas fireplace?

- Before turning on your fireplace, be sure that it has been cleaned and inspected in the last two years.
- Check that the glass doors are airtight.

Always turn off your fireplace before leaving the house or going to bed.

Remember!

- The perfect time to check the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors—and change them if necessary—is when you set your clocks back in the fall and forward in the spring.
 - Each floor of your house, including the basement, must be equipped with at least one smoke detector, which should be installed in hallways and rooms.
 - Every room with a gas or oil heating unit needs a carbon monoxide detector.
- Keep a fire extinguisher easily accessible and be sure you know how to use it.

Whichever type of heating you use, stay safe and warm this winter with these simple tips. If you're a current OTIP policyholder, contact us at [1-833-494-0089](tel:1-833-494-0089) to review your existing home insurance policy. If you're not insured with OTIP and are shopping for home insurance, call us at [1-833-615-9326](tel:1-833-615-9326) to get a quote and receive a \$20 gift card of your choice!