

# STAYING in Touch

Tips, strategies, and advice to help you choose the right insurance coverage from your Insurance Shopper



## Auto Insurance has changed

You now have more choice

On September 1, 2010, the Ontario Government implemented a major overhaul to automobile insurance in the Province. These changes provide consumers with more choice and flexibility to purchase coverage that best meets their protection needs and budgets.

You now have choices to customize your medical and rehabilitation benefits, certain deductibles and income replacement coverage. The following chart summarizes these changes.

New Auto Policy coverage – effective as of your renewal date.	New options now available – If you want to increase your benefits, here are some of your new options.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medical &amp; rehabilitation expenses to a limit of \$50,000 for non-catastrophic injuries. <b><i>This coverage is in your expiring policy but the limit has been reduced to \$50,000 in your renewal policy.</i></b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have the option to increase the limit to \$100,000 for non-catastrophic injuries.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendant care expenses to a limit of \$36,000 for non-catastrophic injuries. <b><i>This coverage is in your expiring policy but the limit has been reduced to \$36,000 in your renewal policy.</i></b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have the option to increase the limit to \$72,000 for non-catastrophic injuries.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Caregiver, Housekeeping &amp; Home Maintenance expenses only available for catastrophic injuries. <b><i>This coverage is in your expiring policy for both catastrophic and non-catastrophic injuries. It is not in your renewal policy for non-catastrophic injuries.</i></b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have the option to purchase this coverage for non-catastrophic injuries</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deductible of \$30,000 when suing for pain and suffering. <b><i>This continues to be the standard deductible provided for by law.</i></b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have the option to reduce the deductible to \$20,000</li> </ul>

### What should you do?

If you are buying a new policy after September 1, 2010, you will receive the new Standard Auto Insurance Policy and have the option to increase your benefits as described to the left.

If your vehicle is already insured, you don't have to do anything until your next policy renewal date.

When your policy comes due for renewal, the new Standard Auto Insurance Policy will apply.

In the meantime, your insurance company will automatically include the following limits/coverages:

- \$100,000 limit for non-catastrophic injuries and \$1,000,000 limit for catastrophic injuries for Medical and Rehabilitation expenses
- \$72,000 limit for non-catastrophic injuries and \$1,000,000 limit for catastrophic injuries for Attendant Care expenses
- Housekeeping and Home Maintenance Expenses up to \$100 per week for all injuries
- Caregiver Expenses up to \$250 per week for your first dependant plus \$50 per week for each additional dependant for all injuries

If you prefer to move to the new Standard Auto Insurance Policy before your next renewal date, contact us. We'll explain your options and help you make an informed choice.

The goal of these changes is to achieve rate stabilization by keeping the costs incurred by insurers in check with emphasis placed on Accident Benefits coverage. Without these reforms, major rate increases would be required.

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## Choosing the right contractor and protecting your investment

Whether you're adding a new room or two, replacing an out-dated kitchen or re-shingling the roof, home improvements can be challenging.

While some homeowners may have the time and skills to do the work themselves, most people will save time and money by hiring a professional. Finding the right contractor is very important. Choose wrongly, and your project can quickly turn into a nightmare of unmet schedules, cost over-runs, shabby workmanship and endless arguments.

### Where do you start?

Ask for recommendations from family, friends, co-workers and neighbours. Building supply companies, hardware stores and local builder/renovator associations are also excellent options.



Once you've got a list, contact your local office of the Better Business Bureau (BBB) to see if any complaints have been lodged against the firms you name. Then, call and check the references. Contractors with nothing to hide will not be offended with these inquiries.

### Always deal with a professional

Protect your home — and yourself — by dealing with a reputable firm that operates in the open market, legally and responsibly. Professional contractors and sub-contractors follow stringent guidelines to protect themselves and those they do business with. Professionals have all the necessary insurance. Their policies are up-to-date and they can provide you with a certificate of insurance. Your peace of mind is worth it.

### Protect yourself

Although you may save money in the short term, uninsured contractors expose you to significant financial risk in the event of an injury or damage to your property. You could be liable if an employee of the contractor is hurt while working on your property or if they damage your home or your neighbour's property.

Before starting any renovation on your home, be sure to call us, your insurance professionals. You want to make sure your investment in your home is adequately insured under your policy

from the get go, as renovations increase the value of your home, and materials values can quickly add up. Calling us first will ensure you have adequate coverage under your policy to protect the investment you're making in your home.

So, check your coverage with us. Then, once you've checked references, confirmed insurance and legal credentials, agreed on a price, schedules and materials, pick the contractor that you like and feel you can communicate with. It's a long process and you'll be glad you did.

### Beware of contractors who:

- Quote prices before seeing the job;
- Knock on the door and claim they can give you a "special price" because they are doing work in your area;
- Offer discounts if they can, "use your home to advertise with".
- Demand unusually large deposits "to buy materials". Most reputable contractors maintain charge accounts with their suppliers;
- Will not supply you with a detailed written contract specifying what they say and what they will do;
- Have an address that is a post office box, a telephone number, or answering service address.

## Why would you insure your home for more than you paid for it?

### Insist on Guaranteed Replacement Cost coverage and always 'Insure to Value'

Many people mistakenly believe the amount they paid for their home is the same as its replacement cost. Unfortunately this is not always true.

Depending on where you live, the cost to rebuild a total loss home can be significantly more than its market value.

Some of the factors that drive up rebuilding/reconstruction costs include:

**Urgency** - Property losses are not planned like a new construction project. When they do occur, there is a need to rebuild as soon as possible. This means the cost of labour, materials and other services required are often significantly higher.

**Demolition and Debris Removal** - Major losses, require the removal of partially damaged property and debris. Costs increase if there are environmental issues such as soil contamination.

**Current Building Codes** - New and more demanding building codes may need to be met when rebuilding or restoring a damaged home.

### Worksite Access and Collateral Damage

At reconstruction sites there is typically less room because of debris, landscaping, fences and other buildings in the vicinity. This causes more work and material storage to be done further away from the site, thus extending the project time and cost. In some cases, physical access requirements result in collateral damage to existing property on and beside the insured's property.

It's easy to see how the cost to rebuild your home could be much more than you paid for it.

Don't get caught in a situation where your loss exceeds your coverage limits. We can provide you with advice to help you determine the correct amount of insurance you need on your

property. And, we'll recommend coverages like Guaranteed Replacement Cost coverage.

It's wise to re-evaluate your home's replacement cost every 5 years to reflect changes in the cost of construction, including building materials and labour. And, if you've made any recent renovations, upgrades or alterations to your home, we can help you establish a new replacement cost value.

If you have any doubts, please contact us.

We'll help you insure your home to its proper value.



## You've had an auto accident - Now what?

You hear a horn, feel a bump and next thing you know, you hear the sound of crumpling metal. With all this going on around you, you're thoughts race. You make sure everyone is okay, and then all is quiet. You think to yourself... "What do I do next? Who do I contact? Where do I go to get my car fixed? Is my car driveable?" All of these questions fog up your mind and confuse you. That's why it's important to be prepared and know what steps to take after an auto accident.

### What you should do after an accident

1. Don't leave the accident scene – leaving the scene could lead to serious or even criminal charges.
2. Determine if there are any injuries and if so, call 911 immediately.
3. Try to determine if there is more than \$1,000 in damage for the whole accident (your car and any other vehicles involved). If the damage appears to be more than \$1,000, call the police and they will come and assess the scene. If the damage is less than \$1,000, you still need to call the police, but they will instruct you on what to do next to assess the damages.
4. If it is safe to do so, move the vehicles off to the side of the road and make the situation safe for all, including passing traffic.
5. Collect names, addresses, telephone numbers, insurance information, license plates numbers, driver's license numbers of all drivers involved in the accident.
6. Remember witnesses and passengers; gather their information as well – names, addresses, telephone numbers.
7. Take notes of what the immediate scene looked like - placement of trees, shrubs, stop signs, signal lights, pedestrian crossings etc. This will help when you report the claim to us.
8. Call us! As soon as you have completed the first 7 steps, call us immediately. We'll answer your questions and guide you through the claims process.

### Keep in mind...

- Stay calm
- Don't argue with other drivers, witnesses, passengers or on-lookers
- Tell your story only to the police
- Never admit liability
- If a tow truck driver suddenly appears without you calling them, don't allow them to take your car. You have the right to choose a tow truck company or if you like, we can help guide you
- Most importantly, STAY SAFE



## Choosing the right insurance... it's easier than you think!

Choice is important to all consumers. We know you have many options when it comes to buying insurance. However, if you want independent, unbiased, uninfluenced, personalized advice, there is only one choice. And that choice is an independent insurance broker.

Independent insurance brokers work for you - not for a call centre, an insurance company or a bank. As your independent insurance broker, we are your consultant and advocate - and we're with you every step of the way. As your life and insurance needs change, whether it's marriage, a new home, young drivers or the

toys that come with retirement, we can tailor an insurance product that fits you perfectly.

Don't settle for one-size fits all solutions. By properly assessing your insurance needs, we can help you purchase customized insurance products that match your needs. Because we represent many insurers, we search the marketplace for the best insurance coverage for you. Unlike direct agents who can only sell the product of the Insurer or bank they work for, we offer more choices, unbiased advice and insurance that fits. This is our advantage for you.

And remember, when you deal with an independent insurance broker, you get a licensed and highly trained insurance professional working for you. From the application process to the never anticipated claim, we're here to guide you, offer advice and advocate on your behalf. You're never alone and never just a number. We're insurance experts and we're on your side.

It's no wonder we say...

*Your Best Insurance, is an Insurance Broker.*

## Business interrupted? Now what?

Let's say you own a restaurant and suffer a fire loss. You are forced to close for two months to make repairs and then you find it takes another two months before your business returns to its normal level. How can you protect your property and your business?

In this situation, your Property policy pays to repair the building and replace your contents.

Your business losses are covered depending on the type of Business Interruption Insurance you've chosen.

If you have Gross Profits Insurance, your loss of income is paid while closed for repairs and while you rebuild your business to its original level up to the limit of coverage. Gross Earnings Insurance only covers the income lost during the time required to repair the premises.

If you own rental income property, you also have two choices for Business Interruption Insurance. Gross Rentals Insurance acts on the same basis as Gross Profit Insurance. If your apartment building suffered a fire, your Gross Rentals Insurance will pay for

the loss of income during the repair period and for lost income during the time it takes to rent all of the damaged apartments up to the limit of coverage.

Whether your business is retail, restaurant, manufacturing or rental properties, we can offer the appropriate Business Interruption Insurance to protect you from loss of income. Call us to get started.

## Tips for driving in the USA

If you plan on driving in the United States, whether in a rental car or your own, there are certain steps you can take to make sure your trip is safe and enjoyable.

First, make sure you have a valid Passport or WHTI-compliant identification like an enhanced driver's license (EDL) or NEXUS card. Since June 2009, Canadians traveling to the U.S. by land or sea are required to present an approved document that shows identity and citizenship.

Be aware that you must declare any meats, fruits, vegetables, plants, seeds, and animals you have in your vehicle or are carrying, including checked baggage and carry-on luggage.

Also make sure to carry your valid Driver's Licence and proof of insurance. An up-to-date pink insurance liability slip includes important telephone numbers and proves you have insurance.

If you are considering renting a vehicle, it is a good idea to extend coverage from your own Ontario automobile policy to the rental vehicle. By adding an OPCF 27 to your auto policy, you won't have to worry about buying extra insurance when you rent a car anywhere in the United States or Canada.

Like Ontario's hands-free law, many states ban the use of cell phones while driving. The states of Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico, Ohio and Pennsylvania even allow cities or regions to implement their own bans. Be safe and smart and avoid electronic distractions while behind the wheel.

It's impossible to know when, where or if you'll get into an accident, but if you do, call us for advice and we'll help guide you through the claims process.

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