



NEIGHBOUR — 2 — NEIGHBOUR



Removing Barriers and Improving Lives

Lucie's journey to Hamilton's suburbs was supposed to be a fresh start.

After moving multiple times to escape escalating violence, she found herself alone, struggling with housing, limited transportation options, and no income. When Lucie reached out to Neighbour to Neighbour, we were there to provide more than just emergency food. As a single parent facing overwhelming challenges, she needed support on many fronts—and our team, in collaboration with other community partners, rallied to find solutions.

At Neighbour to Neighbour, we see empty fridges as just one piece of a much larger puzzle. It often stems from deeper issues like unstable income, mental health challenges, and systemic barriers. That's why our Family Services team offers comprehensive, wraparound support that addresses immediate needs while working toward long-term stability.

*Lucie's name and the details of her story have been modified to protect her identity.



Keeping the Lights On, Rent Paid, and Houses Warm

By Laura Ryan, BSW, MSW
Manager of Family Services, Neighbour to Neighbour

Families in our community are feeling intense economic and social pressures. Our Family Services team helps individuals and families navigate complex systems to meet their most urgent needs by offering financial relief for household electricity bills, financial education, financial advocacy, settlement support, and service navigation.

Our utilities support program reduces household expenses by lowering electricity bills through rebates or grants. This frees up money for other essentials like groceries or rent. Meanwhile, our Money Matters financial counselling empowers clients to make the most of their finances, whether through earning more, saving more, or spending less. Many people who come to Neighbour to Neighbour are on fixed incomes but may miss out on tax credits or other financial aid. That's where our financial advocates step in, helping to identify and secure these extra resources.

“We take the time to understand each person’s unique situation and collaborate with other community partners to find solutions.”

With increasing numbers of newcomers to Canada and long-term immigrants who face persistent barriers to accessing services, our Settlement Worker plays a critical role in helping families find their footing. From navigating language barriers to adapting to a new culture, we provide tailored support at each stage of their journey. We connect newcomers with health supports, legal services, housing, food, and employment supports. It's about more than just service referral—it's about creating a sense of belonging and guiding people toward long-term stability. Simply put, it's about being a good neighbour.

What makes our work genuinely effective is our commitment to meeting people where they are (literally and figuratively). We take the time to understand each person's unique situation and collaborate with other community partners to find solutions, whether securing housing, accessing specialized services, or simply asking, “Do you know someone who can help with this?” and making those vital connections happen.



Laura grew up watching her parents’ dedication to social services and community building through volunteering, which inspired her lifelong commitment to community support. Today, she’s passionate about creating sustainable solutions. Clients describe Laura as empathetic, authentic, and a good neighbour, qualities that guide her work every day.



Lucie's Story

Lucie met and married her husband years ago, but things didn't go as planned. After facing increasing violence at home and escalating involvement with police and child protection services, she had to make difficult, hurried moves from city to city across Ontario. Each move held hope for a new start, but she struggled to create a plan to turn that hope into reality.

She landed in Hamilton, alone with her children, unsure what to do next. Lucie had been isolated by her husband and discouraged from learning English. She had never done taxes by herself, opened her own bank account, or had income in her own name. She had no car and lived outside Hamilton's bus network, so she rarely left the house alone.

Lucie was referred to the Neighbour to Neighbour food bank by one of our partner agencies, and there she met one of our friendly counsellors. She tried to speak in English, but the counsellor quickly realized that limitation and started using Google Translate to communicate. Lucie generously trusted our counsellor with details about what she'd been going through and what challenges were complicating her plan. She needed food and help setting up her new home, but she also needed a plan for making ends meet as a single mom.

Hearing Lucie's story, the counsellor shared their concerns with their manager and together they made a plan. The manager connected with Neighbour to Neighbour's Money Matters financial advocate, who speaks Lucie's preferred language, and the housing worker from a partner agency. Lucie could not get to our offices consistently, so we got creative and discovered a private community room at her apartment building. The team suggested strategies that would fit Lucie's needs. They helped her apply for an electricity rebate to cover most of her bill going forward, freeing up money for other essentials like food and rent.

Lucie is now settled in an affordable apartment, receiving Ontario Works and the child tax benefit. She has been connected to English language classes, and our legal advocate ensures she gets the child support she needs.

Driving Change Through Community Support

For over 35 years, our team of dedicated staff and volunteers have been working to address the issues of food insecurity and poverty head-on. We do this by offering programs and services that our neighbours have identified as critical.

Neighbour to Neighbour would like to recognize The City of Hamilton, Ontario Electricity Board, The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and the Hamilton Community Foundation for their generous contributions to our Family Services Program. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our donors and supporters whose continued generosity makes our work possible.

Now, more than ever, your support is essential in helping us uplift families in our community.



DONATE TODAY

These vital programs and services at Neighbour to Neighbour rely on the generous donations of our community.

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Hamilton L9C 3K9

www.n2ncentre.com 905-574-1334

Charitable Registration Number: 11905 3130 RR0001

LAST YEAR,
NEIGHBOUR TO
NEIGHBOUR
HELPED DELIVER:



\$1,025,000 in
electricity rebates and
grants, benefiting
2,112 people in the
Hamilton area.



1.1 million pounds of
food to **11,962**
neighbours in our
community. Over **38%**
were children.



Financial advocacy to
43 new households,
supporting the
financial needs of
113 people.



Settlement support to
720 new households,
compared to **464** the
year before.