

Ontario Energy Board

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LEAP Implementation Working Groups

Dear Mrs. Walli,

On behalf of Neighbour to Neighbour Centre, I would like to apply to participate on one of the stakeholders working groups regarding LEAP implementation (Financial Assistance). We are a non-profit agency with limited funds and we would like to request cost eligibility for participation on a working group.

Neighbour to Neighbour Centre's commitment to our community is reflected in both our Mission and Vision Statements: Through diverse programs and partnerships we are the first stop with individuals and families who want help with difficulties they encounter on their path to self-sufficiency. Vision Statement: Leading poverty prevention in our neighbourhood.

The community Neighbour to Neighbour Centre serves is composed of families led by single parents or by two parents, immigrants and refugees, displaced teenagers, seniors, mentally ill persons etc. who are either amongst the working poor, receiving Ontario Works or on some form of government pension. We are the only multi-service agency on Hamilton Mountain servicing the unemployed and underemployed families for last 23 years. We serve the highest proportion of working poor families among all the foodbanks in the City. In the last 4 months, we have seen a drastic increase in our Food bank use, from an average of 900 families to 1100 families per month.

Neighbour to Neighbour Centre was the agency that initially brought Share the Warmth Program to Hamilton back in 2000. Share the Warmth program was offered in our Centre until July of 2008. Our staff and volunteers have an extensive knowledge and understanding of issues surrounding utility subsidy. Since the discontinuation of Share the Warmth Program, there has been a huge gap in utility subsidy and our clients were struggling to find appropriate support to help pay their bills. We were extremely pleased to hear the press release from OEB announcing new funding available for low income utility assistance.

We believe that there is no other agency that is better qualified in the City of Hamilton, to both provide feedback to the working group, and deliver utility subsidy program to low-income clients.

I am available to provide further information if necessary.

Sincerely,

Snezana Jevtic
Director of Family Services

Denise Arkell
Executive Director