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Firefighters from Thames Centre and Central Elgin fight a house fire at 889 Crampton Dr. in Belmont, southeast of London yesterday. No one was home during the blaze. For safety reasons, firefighters didn't enter the house, but fought the flames from outside.

# Stricken family's house gutted

BY JOE BELANGER

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BELMONT — A Belmont family at hospital tending to a seriously ill child was dealt a second devastating blow yesterday when their home southeast of London was gutted by fire.

Firefighters from two municipalities, Thames Centre and Central Elgin, rushed to the noon-hour fire at the farmhouse of John and Elise Vervoordeldonk on Crampton Drive between

Westchester Bourne Road and Dorchester Road, south of Highway 401.

The white, two-storey frame home was "fully involved" by the time firefighters arrived. No one was at home.

Neighbours said the Vervoordeldonk, who have four children ages four to 15, were at a London hospital where their 13-year-old son was undergoing surgery for a serious illness.

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**“These are very, very good people, a nice loving family, who've been going through a lot lately and they certainly didn't deserve this.”**

*Neighbour Rachel Boland*

lot lately and they certainly didn't deserve this," said neighbour Rachel Boland, 24.

The stubborn fire burned for hours as firefighters were

unable to get inside and a double roof allowed the fire to move.

"The house was fully involved when they got here and for safety reasons firefighters can't go in, so they've had to fight it from the outside," said Middlesex OPP Sgt. Chris Gheysen.

Water supply was also a problem as a tanker truck raced between a pond on a neighbouring farm and the fire to keep a portable tank filled.

Neighbours gathered at the

dairy farm and jumped into action to ensure the dairy cows had water, feed and air.

An electrician was called in to ensure the barn had power to enable neighbours to milk the cows.

"They're people who'd do anything for you, just stop whatever they were doing to help," said Rhonda Caddey, whose husband Steve helped out in the barn.

"The cows have got to be milked, regardless."

*Joe Belanger is a Free Press*