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Hall Monitor: More explosion evacuees allowed home

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[Hall Monitor: David Miller](#), [Propane Explosion](#)



HALL MONITOR



ALLISON HANES

Toronto is fast-tracking its reevaluation of zoning bylaws that permit propane storage facilities Mayor David Miller said Tuesday. The city was already in the process of undertaking a review of all the zoning regulations dating from pre-amalgamation to bring them into harmony.

"We will act as quickly as possible with respect to propane," he said, three days after Sunrise Propanes of North York blew up forcing thousands of residents to flee in their pyjamas in the middle of the night.

But just who has the final say over where propane facilities set up shop continues to be the subject of finger-pointing between the province and the city.

The Mayor admitted Tuesday that he's not sure the city can stop Sunrise from reopening.

"I don't know from a city perspective if we have the authority to say no or not," Mr. Miller said, adding that much will depend on the outcome of the investigation.

Zoning allowing the Murray Dr. propane depot dates from 1952 when the former city of North York permitted such a use. But the city says it had no control over authorizing Sunrise's

propane operation in 2004, rather the province did.

Mr. Miller compared the situation regarding permits to propane facilities to the restaurant industry. He said the city controls land-use regulations that permit where a restaurant can establish, but if the province would sign off on the liquor license.

Most of the 12,000 evacuee's from Sunday's blast have now been allowed to return home. Another group was invited to return shortly after 11:15 a.m. But the two blocks closest to the epicentre remain unsafe due to the discovery of asbestos, which acting fire chief Jim Shelton said likely originated at from a destroyed building on the site of Sunrise Propanes.

"In broad strokes, the people who can't go home are the ones closest to the site," said Mr. Miller. The houses still under evacuation order include six homes that have are suspected of having structural damage and issued an "order" by the city necessitating an engineering inspection.

Photo of Vincenzo Palozzo returning to his home yesterday by Mark Blinch, Reuters