



Blast neighbours suing for \$900M

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Lawsuits target city, Sunrise Propane, safety authority and province

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Desperate for some resolve after an explosion at a propane facility shattered their lives this weekend, Downsview residents are seeking more than \$900 million in class-action lawsuits against Sunrise Propane and government bodies they feel allowed the company to operate in their neighbourhood.

At least four class-action suits were filed in court yesterday. Some name Sunrise Propane Industrial Gases and other firms listed as operating on the Murray Rd. site. Others name the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, the city of Toronto and the province of Ontario.

Also yesterday, the TSSA said Sunrise was issued "cease and desist" orders in 2006 for violations.

The various suits claim the defendants are liable for income loss, personal injuries, diminution in property value and long-term financial damage. Some also claim negligence and nuisance.

"My parents have not been let back into their house and I don't think they ever will," said John Santoro, 44, at a news conference yesterday. Santoro and his mother, Giuseppina, are the representative plaintiffs in an estimated \$300-million class-action suit against Sunrise Propane Energy Group Inc. and the city. Class-action lawyer Harvin Pitch said the province and the TSSA have been notified they will be served in 60 days.

Santoro said the 67-year-old couple's Spalding Rd. home was badly damaged in the explosion and has been deemed unsafe. He said his mother is traumatized and his father, who has Alzheimer's, spends his days crying. He said the incident "stripped them of their dignity."

Santoro lives in Maple but owns and rents out a home in the area.

Pitch and colleague Richard Bogoroch, a personal injury lawyer, said hundreds are part of the suit, but they anticipate thousands will eventually join. Pitch said the city, the province and the TSSA all contributed to licensing or zoning that made it possible for Sunrise Propane to operate across from homes.

None of these allegations have been proven in court.

City spokesperson Francine Antonio said the city wouldn't comment on pending legal action. The province and the TSSA did not return requests for comment yesterday.

Sunrise Propane spokesperson Danny Roth said the firm had not yet received notice of the lawsuits.