The Port Hope Project

What you should know
Port Hope is a vibrant, active community, well known for its award-winning heritage downtown and friendly, small-town character. It’s also a healthy community where people live, work and play — and families raise their children — just like anywhere else.

Port Hope, like many other Canadian towns, has an industrial past that left behind environmental waste. Port Hope, unlike so many others, is seizing an opportunity to solve the problem. The Port Hope Area Initiative (PHAI) is a federal environmental clean-up program. Its mandate is the remediation and local, long-term, safe management of historic, low-level radioactive waste in Port Hope and neighbouring Port Granby in Southeast Clarington.*

If you are thinking about moving to Port Hope and would like information about historic low-level radioactive waste and the PHAI, this booklet is a good place to start.

*The Port Hope Area Initiative Management Office (PHAI MO) is the federal agency created to carry out the Port Hope and Port Granby projects. The PHAI MO is a partnership of Natural Resources Canada, Atomic Energy of Canada Limited and Public Works and Government Services Canada.
What is the Port Hope Project?

The Port Hope Project, as part of the PHAL, involves the cleanup of approximately 1.2 million cubic metres of historic low-level radioactive waste from various sites in Port Hope, the construction of an engineered aboveground mound where the waste will be safely contained, and the long-term monitoring and maintenance of the new waste management facility.

Years of detailed studies, review and government approvals have brought the project to the point where it is today. Construction to prepare for the cleanup has begun at the site of the new long-term waste management facility on the outskirts of the urban area. Radiological surveys are underway to further confirm the volume of low-level radioactive waste to be cleaned up.

More than a decade of independent surveys shows that people love living in Port Hope, know about the project and are confident it can be done safely.
History of low-level radioactive waste in Port Hope

The historic low-level radioactive waste is a consequence of past practices involving the refining of radium and uranium — between the 1930s and 1980s — by a former Canadian Crown Corporation, Eldorado Nuclear Limited, and its private sector predecessors.

During the mid 1970s, the federal government oversaw an initial cleanup of the waste in urban Port Hope. This was followed by a province-wide search for a long-term waste management solution. When this proved unsuccessful, community based concepts to address local, long-term management of the waste were developed.

In 2001, a legal agreement based on these concepts was signed by the municipalities of Port Hope and Clarington and the Government of Canada. This resulted in the formation of the PHAI, the once-and-for-all solution for the cleanup of the historic low-level radioactive waste.
Port Hope — a safe place to live

The health of Port Hope residents has been studied extensively over the years, and the results of these studies all point to one conclusion: Port Hope is as safe as anywhere in Canada.

A comprehensive review, undertaken by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, of more than 40 environmental and epidemiological studies concluded “no adverse health effects have occurred or are likely to occur in Port Hope as a result of the nuclear industry’s operations in the town.”

The PHAI’s environmental monitoring and compliance plans will ensure the safety of the Port Hope Project. Among these is the dust management plan, which takes a three-pronged approach to prevent, monitor and control dust whenever work is underway. The plan sets out actions, roles and responsibilities for all project staff and contractors.

Through environmental monitoring, the PHAI will confirm that measures taken to minimize impacts from project activities are effective. Monitoring results — posted at www.phai.ca whenever work is underway — provide assurance that human health and the environment are protected.

Today, during and after the cleanup, radiation levels in Port Hope are — and will continue to be — similar to anywhere in Southern Ontario, including downtown Toronto.
Clean-up sites and transportation routes

The Port Hope Project involves the cleanup of soil contaminated with historic, low-level radioactive waste plus a specified volume of historic, industrial waste located at four municipally-owned sites.

The three designated project transportation routes, which include a dedicated access road to the new facility site, were chosen in consultation with the community and make use of pre-existing truck routes to minimize impact on residences, schools, businesses and the environment.

Beginning in 2015/2016 through to 2022, waste is scheduled to be excavated, transported and safely placed in an engineered aboveground storage mound. The mound will be capped, closed and monitored for hundreds of years.
Safely transporting waste

Proven practices to protect people and the environment will be used during the cleanup to safely transport historic low-level radioactive waste.

Trucks carrying waste will be securely covered and monitored before being cleared to leave a clean-up site. No truck will be released to travel on public roads until it is confirmed to be clean.

Drivers will be specially trained, and speed limits on transportation routes will be strictly enforced. Trip tickets for each load will be issued when the truck leaves a worksite and verified upon arrival at the waste management facility. All trucks carrying waste will be clearly marked with PHAI signage and a contact phone number.
The waste will be consolidated in a new, engineered aboveground mound, designed to isolate the waste by securely encapsulating it on the top, bottom and sides with multiple layers of natural and specially manufactured materials.

These layers function as an integrated system that prevents contaminants from entering the environment and precipitation from entering the mound. Water (leachate) collected from inside the mound will be treated in a new, state-of-the-art water treatment facility.

The safety and performance of the mound will be closely monitored during construction and for hundreds of years into the future. Regular monitoring will include:

- Visual inspections of the mound and site;
- Measurement of the amount and quality of leachate collected from within the mound; and
- Groundwater quality testing in wells surrounding the facility.
Radiological information about Port Hope properties

Radiological information on properties in urban Port Hope has been collected since the initial federal-provincial cleanup in the mid 1970s.

Anyone buying property in urban (Ward 1) Port Hope should request a copy of the property’s Radiological Status Letter (RSL) from the Realtor. The RSL summarizes information on any previous investigations and cleanups that may have taken place at the property.

Any member of the public may request a copy of the RSL, the entire radiological property file or specific information in the file, such as radon levels, by contacting the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Office at 905.885.9488.

As part of the Port Hope Project, the PHAI is currently undertaking a Property Radiological Survey of every property in Ward 1 Port Hope plus a small number in rural Ward 2. About 90% of Port Hope properties will not require any cleanup at all. The survey will confirm the extent of the cleanup required for those that do.
Property Value Protection Program

The Property Value Protection (PVP) Program offers compensation to eligible property owners within a designated PVP zone. Owners who realize a financial loss on the sale of their property, loss of rental income or mortgage renewal difficulties as a result of PHAI activities are eligible to apply for compensation. The PVP Program began in 2001 and will remain in effect until two years after the completion of the long-term waste management facility.

Property owners considering selling their home or land are encouraged to visit the PHAI Project Information Exchange at 115 Toronto Road in Port Hope to learn about the PVP Program. More detailed information can also be found at www.phai.ca under the PVP/Real Estate tab.

The PVP Zone was developed to include both the Port Hope and Port Granby projects. The zone delineates an area in which claims for compensation will be considered, however, most properties within the zone are not expected to realize a project-related impact.
Economic benefits

The Government of Canada has committed $1.28 billion to complete the PHAI over the next 10 years. During the clean-up phase, the area economy will realize significant economic benefits. The PHAI is expected to create over a thousand new jobs in the region. Every project dollar spent is estimated to generate an additional $0.40 in economic spin-offs.

Project spending will create new opportunities for small and medium businesses. In co-operation with the municipality and chamber of commerce, the PHAI Management Office hosts regular seminars and targeted business sessions to increase awareness of the project’s economic potential.
The long-term solution for Port Hope’s historic low-level radioactive waste is underway.

By cleaning up and restoring once-contaminated properties, the Port Hope Project will result in significant environmental and social benefits.

Once completed, the aboveground mound is envisioned for community uses such as walking trails, gardens and a lookout. The land around the facility is planned for active recreation such as soccer fields.

Together, the Port Hope community and the federal government are accomplishing an environmental solution for generations to come.