

Public Attitude Research Regarding the Port Hope Area Initiative

Port Hope Project

Wave 10

December 2011

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Municipalities of Port Hope and Clarington each have a legal agreement with the federal government to complete the cleanup and safe long-term management of historic low-level radioactive waste and, in the case of Port Hope, some industrial wastes. The projects include engineering and environmental assessment studies, public consultation, a property value protection program, hosting fees to the municipalities, construction of facilities, and ongoing monitoring. The Port Hope Project (PHP) is part of the Port Hope Area Initiative (PHAI), which is being conducted on behalf of the federal government by the Port Hope Area Initiative Management Office (PHAI MO), which took over lead responsibility for the PHAI in 2009 from the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Office (LLRWMO).

After five years of study and community consultation, the LLRWMO recommended the relocation of all the Port Hope waste to one new long-term waste management facility located just south of Hwy. 401 and west of Baulch Rd. in the Municipality of Port Hope. The Municipality of Port Hope and the federal Responsible Authorities (Natural Resources Canada, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and Fisheries and Oceans Canada) accepted the findings of the environmental assessment that the Project is not likely to cause any significant adverse environmental effects, provided the appropriate mitigation measures are implemented.

In October 2009 the CNSC granted AECL a five-year licence to undertake the Port Hope Project. Within the past year several activities have commenced including a trial radiological resurvey of 35 properties, and the awarding of a contract to undertake the detailed design of the above-ground engineered mound and other related work.

As part of the Port Hope Area Initiative (PHAI), AECL has commissioned annual public attitude research to monitor public awareness of the PHAI, identify issues and concerns, determine communications needs of the public, and provide data regarding public attitudes and behaviours. This report presents the findings of the tenth wave of telephone surveying carried out among the general public in Wards 1 and 2 of Port Hope during November - December 2012. The first wave was undertaken among area residents in February 2002, followed by studies in April 2003, May 2004, October 2005, November 2006, October 2007, October 2008, November 2009 and November 2010.

1.2 KEY FINDINGS

Key findings from the 2011 survey include:

- Port Hope residents continue to be satisfied with living in their community, with 68% stating that they are “very satisfied” and over 90% that they are “very” or “somewhat” satisfied. (Table 3.1-1)
- For the first time in tracking, in 2011 relocation / clean up / transfer of low-level radioactive waste to the PHAI facility (24%) took the lead as the single most frequently mentioned issue facing the community (Table 3.2-1). Collectively, radioactive waste issues are named by 37% of respondents in total including the presence of radioactive waste (11%), radioactivity / radiation without attributing a source (1%), and the new waste site (1%). The following results shed additional light on the radioactive waste clean-up issue:
 - ◆ 61% say the cleanup of low-level radioactive waste is a “very important” issue and 87% say it is “somewhat” or “very” important. (Table 3.3)
 - ◆ Living in a community dealing with radioactive waste management facilities is not something people dwell upon. 73% continue to “never” or “not very often” think about this fact. (Tables 4.3.1)
 - ◆ 83% claim to know at least something about the presence of low-level radioactive waste in their community. (Table 4.1-1)
 - ◆ 84% continue to be “very” or “somewhat” confident that the waste can be safely managed at the recommended facility for the long term, with 45% “very confident”. Overall, confidence levels (very or somewhat confident) have risen gradually from 65% in 2002 to 84% in 2011. (Table 5.1-1).
 - ◆ The clear majority of respondents are confident that the project will be able to minimize the effects of traffic (79%) and dust (73%), although fewer are as confident that the project will minimize the effects on the loss of property values (54%). (Table 5.1-4)
 - ◆ The top actions to increase confidence in the long-term waste management facility continue to be, “inform residents honestly / provide regular updates / publish information via brochures, website, media” (23%), and “closely monitor, test, maintain and inspect” the facility (20%). Thirteen percent (13%) report “no safety concerns”. (Table 5.2-3)
 - ◆ The issue concerning people most reflects the fact that the Port Hope Project is moving closer to the construction and cleanup phase. The top most concerns continue to be “transporting / removing waste - spills, accidents, dust” (23%) followed by the “length of time it will take” (14%), “contamination of soil, water, air / leakage” (11%) and “storage methods” (10%). (Table 5.2-1)

- Awareness of low-level radioactive waste and the public's favourable attitude towards the Port Hope Area Initiative may be attributed to PHAI communications activities. The PHAI continues to receive positive assessments regarding its public communications efforts.
 - ◆ Awareness of the Port Hope Area Initiative (94%) and the Port Hope Project (76%) is high. (Table 4.2-1)
 - ◆ 92% heard about plans to clean up some residences and other sites contaminated with low-level radioactive waste and 88% heard about plans to transport contaminated soil to the new long-term waste management facility along designated routes. Only 38% heard about plans to do a radiation re-survey of every property in Ward 1. (Table 4.2-3)
 - ◆ 77% of the respondents report being "very" or "somewhat" satisfied with the manner in which the PHAI provides information about its activities (Table 6.1), and 73% feel that they have had adequate opportunities to provide input to the Project (Table 6.3-1).
 - ◆ Compared to previous years, significantly more respondents name the staff of the PHAI (40%) and the PHAI website (21%) as the sources trusted most to provide accurate and complete information about the PHAI. Significantly more also name the Municipality of Port Hope (28%), federal government agencies (23%) and local media (20%). One-quarter continue to name independent qualified scientists (28%). (Table 6.2-2)
 - ◆ At 52% in 2011, the highest ever proportion of respondents says they are familiar with the Property Value Protection Program (PVPP) (Table 4.4-2). Familiarity is highest among respondents who currently own property in the Municipality of Port Hope, on or south of Dale Road/County Road 2 than respondents who do not own property in this Zone (57% vs. 44%). The staff of the PHP or PVPP (54%), the PHAI website (43%), the Municipality of Port Hope (39%), and Real Estate Agents (39%) are the most frequently named sources of information about the PVPP. (Table 4.4-3).
- Several findings emerge relevant to PHAI MO future communications initiatives:
 - ◆ Newsletters or brochures mailed to residents (mentioned by 68%) are the preferred sources of information about the Port Hope Area Initiative. Responses also indicate a need for a variety of media: newspapers (33%), public meetings or open houses (37%), and electronic updates by email or Internet (25%) were mentioned as also being desired information sources. (Table 6.2-1)
 - ◆ The most prominent sources of local news continue to be print media (76%). 51% listen to local news on the radio, 36% get their news via the Internet, and 24% watch local news on television. (Tables 6.4-1)