

**Public Opinion
Assessment of the
Port Hope Area Initiative**
Wave 2, April 2003

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Prepared for:
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2001, the Municipalities of Port Hope and Clarington entered into a legal agreement with the federal government to complete the cleanup and safe long-term management of soils contaminated with historic low-level radioactive waste and, in the case of Port Hope, some industrial wastes. The proposed projects include engineering and environmental assessment studies, public consultation, a property value protection program, compensation to municipalities, construction of facilities, and ongoing monitoring. The projects together are called the Port Hope Area Initiative (PHAI) and are being conducted on behalf of the federal government by the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Office (LLRWMO).

As part of the PHAI, the LLRWMO has commissioned periodic public opinion research to monitor public awareness of the PHAI and identify any concerns that may arise. This report presents the findings of a second wave (W2) of telephone surveying carried out among the general public in the Port Hope area during April 2003. The first wave (W1) was undertaken among area residents in February 2002.

A total of 600 interviews were conducted by *IntelliPulse Inc.* from April 8 - 13, 2003. A sample of this size yields results that are accurate within $\pm 4.1\%$, 19 out of 20 times. The sample was divided into three regions and drawn disproportionately such that 250 interviews were completed in Ward 1 of Port Hope, 250 in Ward 4 of Clarington, and 100 interviews in Ward 2 of Port Hope. The confidence interval for the samples of 250 is $\pm 6.4\%$, and for the sample of 100 it is $\pm 10.3\%$.

Key findings from the 2003 survey include:

- Overall, 68% of respondents know at least something about the presence of low-level radioactive waste and radioactive waste management facilities in their community. Ward 1 residents are most knowledgeable about low-level radioactive waste (81% are at least somewhat knowledgeable compared to 66% in Ward 2 and 55% in Ward 4). Nevertheless, living in a community with radioactive waste management facilities and areas where there is radioactive contaminated soil is not something people dwell upon. Over two-thirds of the respondents (72%) either 'never' or 'not very often' think about this fact. In Ward 1, 32% think about it 'often' or 'very often' compared to Wards 2 (23%) and 4 (24%).
- The presence of radioactive waste was volunteered by only ten percent (10%) of all respondents as an issue facing the community (a significant decrease from 17% in 2002). However, radioactive waste is still the concern mentioned most frequently in Port Hope Ward 1 (mentioned by 17%) and Ward 2 (mentioned by 12%). By comparison, only 1% mentioned it as an issue in Clarington. Other issues mentioned include hospitals and health care (11%) and population and industrial growth (12%).

- The public has varying levels of familiarity with the organizations handling radioactive material in the municipalities. The most widely known organization is OPG (91% are ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ familiar). Less familiar to the public are AECL (57%), Cameco (53%), LLRWMO (48%), and Zircatec (37%). Ward 1 respondents have a much higher awareness of these latter organizations than Ward 2 and 4 respondents. Respondents who are familiar with each organization are generally positive in their assessment of how good a job the organization is doing at managing its responsibilities for public health, safety and environmental protection - Zircatec (65%), LLRWMO (64%), Cameco (61%), OPG (57%), and AECL (55%).
- There is a significant increase in overall awareness of the PHAI from 2002, increasing from 34% to 54%. The increase in awareness is even more dramatic among Ward 1 residents in the past year, rising from 40% to 68%. Ward 1 residents are also more aware of the individual facilities than residents of other wards. Minimal change is noted in awareness of the individual facilities when compared to last year. The highest awareness is for the Port Granby Waste Management Facility (58%), followed by the Welcome Waste management Facility (44%), and the Highland Drive Temporary Storage Site (38%).
- There are improvements in area residents’ confidence in the project’s ability to clean up the contaminated soil, and in the long-term safe management of the low level radioactive waste. Overall, 67% (up from 62%) are at least ‘somewhat’ confident in the project’s ability to clean up the contaminated soil and 71% (up from 62%) are confident in the long-term safe management of the waste. However, very few are ‘very’ confident on both counts (16% and 24% respectively). There were no significant variations in these confidence levels among the three municipal wards.
- Overall, 54% of respondents rated the LLRWMO as doing a good or very good job of addressing questions people may have about its activities, a statistically significant increase from 49% in 2002. Taking a closer look by region, almost two-thirds (62%) of Ward 1 residents compared to 55% of Ward 2 and 44% of Ward 4 residents rate the LLRWMO as doing a good or very good job. Ward 2 residents were most likely to “have no questions” (31%), compared to Ward 4 (25%) and Ward 1 (17%).
- Residents’ concerns about the Port Hope Area Initiative fall into three categories and are similar to those reported in 2002. Most frequently mentioned were concerns about environmental integrity of the projects such as the cleanup process, safe storage of the waste, and protecting public health, safety and the environment (mentioned by 58%). Another twenty-seven percent (27%) mentioned some aspect of the planning and implementation of the projects such as keeping the public informed and how long the process will take. Fifteen percent (15%) are concerned about how the projects might affect them personally, including cost and location of the sites. (Table 5.2.1)
- The newspaper, in particular the local community newspaper, is an important source of information for area residents. It is the key source for local news and information

(66%), and for information on the program and facilities (38%).

- When asked how they would prefer to receive information about the PHAI, 46% of respondents mentioned a brochure or newsletter mailed to their home, 37% mentioned radio, television and newspaper advertising and 28% mentioned articles or stories in the local media. A total of 34% mentioned some form of public participation, whether participating on a committee of local citizens monitoring the project (11%), attending public open houses (10%), talking to staff at the Project Information Exchange (7%) or participating in workshops with technical staff (6%).
- Several sources are indicated as providing accurate and complete information about the PHAI. In Ward 1, independent scientists, the LLRWMO, and the media received a comparable number of mentions (18% – 22%). In Ward 2, independent scientists ranked highest (mentioned by 31%). The media, a committee of local citizens and the LLRWMO (mentioned by 12% - 14%) ranked second behind independent scientists. And in Ward 4, where the LLRWMO is not as well known outside Port Granby and its immediate surroundings, independent scientists, the media and a committee of local citizens are ranked highest (mentioned by 18% - 21%).
- Residents of the Municipality of Port Hope and Ward 4 of the Municipality of Clarington are satisfied with living in their community (95%). Indeed 67% are ‘very’ satisfied, a significant increase from 61% in 2002. Moreover, significantly more residents (71%, up from 64% in 2002) are likely to experience an increase in satisfaction with the completion of the Port Hope Area Initiative, while most of the remainder does not know (27%).

For more information, the full report is available from the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Office, Project Information Exchange at 110 Walton Street, Port Hope. Telephone 905-885-0291 or toll-free 1-866-255-2755.