

1. Summary

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

As part of the Port Granby Project, the Port Hope Area Initiative (PHAI) has commissioned periodic public attitude research to monitor public awareness of the PHAI, identify issues and concerns, determine the communication needs of the public, and provide data regarding public attitudes and preferences.

The most recent iteration of the Port Granby Project Public Attitude Survey in the Fall of 2016 was conducted by CCI Research Inc. (CCI Research). Survey packages containing an introduction letter explaining the project, a survey questionnaire booklet, a postage-paid return envelope, and a contact card describing how to receive a summary copy of the survey results were mailed to 671 area property owners in October. Respondents had the option of completing the questionnaire booklet and returning it by letter mail, completing the survey online, or calling CCI Research toll-free to complete their survey by telephone. Additionally, subsequent to the initial mailing, a reminder letter and a reminder postcard were mailed to all households encouraging homeowners to complete their questionnaire before the survey deadline in November. The deadline was then extended to the beginning of December and an additional reminder postcard was sent out encouraging homeowners to submit their responses. In total, 171 respondents completed the survey: 141 questionnaire booklets were returned by mail, 27 were completed online, and three surveys were completed by telephone (Table 3-1). The confidence interval for the overall Port Granby sample is +/-6.5%, 19 times out of 20 (Table 3-2).

The PHAI was particularly interested in examining survey responses from property owners within Zone 3, Clarington, as this is the area that contains the current and proposed historic low level radioactive waste management sites. Therefore, survey findings are presented in this report for the overall Port Granby sample, as well as separately by proximity, where “Close Zone” represents households within Zone 3, Clarington, and “Far Zone” represents households from all other geographical zones combined. In total, 20% of survey respondents were from the Close Zone, and the remaining 80% were from the Far Zone (Table 3-1).

This report presents the findings for the 2016 Port Granby Project Public Attitude Survey, and where applicable, compares the results to those from similar previous studies conducted in 2014, 2011, and 2007.

KEY FINDINGS

Satisfaction with Living in the Community

Overall satisfaction with living in the community has remained high over time, with 93% of respondents indicating they are “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” (Table 6-3). It is interesting to note that there has been a notable increase in the proportion of Close Zone respondents who indicated that they are “very satisfied” living in their community, with this result largely attributable to a shift from “somewhat satisfied” responses.

Important Community Issues

Unlike the previous studies in 2011 and 2014, the current findings show that the relocation of radioactive waste was not the top issue in the community; however, it was second from the top, with 16% of respondents identifying this in an open-ended format as one of the most important issues facing their community (Table 6-6). In particular, while almost half (46%) of those from the Close Zone cited the Port Granby Project and the relocation of radioactive waste as the most important issue in 2014, only about one-quarter (23%) cited it as the most important issue in 2016.

Overall, managing the population growth and development (22%), high cost of living (13%), and traffic congestion (11%) were mentioned as top community issues by greater proportions of respondents in 2016 as compared to 2014.

Awareness and Knowledge about Low-Level Radioactive Waste in Area

Most respondents indicated that they rarely think about living in a community with a low-level radioactive waste management facility; specifically, about seven out of ten respondents (69%) think about it “not very often” or “never,” which maintains the previous increase in this type of result over the 2007 findings (Table 6-9).

Self-assessed knowledge about the presence of historic low-level radioactive waste in the community is similar to previous years, with 83% of respondents indicating that they are “very knowledgeable” or “somewhat knowledgeable” about this topic (Table 6-12).

Familiarity with the Port Hope Project

Similar to 2014, the large majority of respondents have heard about the Port Hope Area Initiative (87%), the Port Granby Project (92%), the existing Port Granby waste management facility (86%) and the new Port Granby long-term waste management facility (83%) (Table 6-15). Additionally, more than four out of five respondents (84%) overall are aware that the new Port Granby long-term waste management facility is currently under construction (Chart 6-16).

Since 2007, familiarity with the Port Granby Project has increased from about half (51%) to about three-quarters of respondents (73%) indicating they are “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar” with the project (Table 6-20). This increase in familiarity was also observed among respondents from the Close Zone; additionally, a greater proportion of respondents from the Close Zone reported that they are “very familiar” with the Port Granby Project compared to those in the Far Zone.

Confidence and Concerns Regarding the Port Hope Project

Close to two-thirds of the survey respondents overall expressed confidence that the waste can be safely managed at the new long-term waste management facility, with 64% indicating they were either “very confident” or “somewhat confident” (Table 6-23). While confidence is similar to 2014, it has increased since the 2007 and 2011 results.

When asked to volunteer what concerns they might have about the long-term waste management facility, there were a wide range of diverse issues or concerns identified by respondents, the most common of which were: contamination of the environment (25%),

safe transportation of the waste (20%), proper design and long-term operation of the facility (15%), spillage or leakage (14%), and managing/ monitoring long-term effects (14%), (Table 6-24).

When asked to specify what actions or decisions would make them more confident about the safety of the facility, the most commonly reported themes were: to have long-term testing/monitoring (27%), to better inform the public (24%), and to have good facility management and monitoring (9%) (Table 6-25).

When asked to identify the benefits of the Port Granby Project, more than half of the survey respondents (57%) identified one or more benefits to the project. The most common response was the cleanup and containment of the radioactive waste (39%) and a cleaner environment (9%) (Table 6-26). Although 3% of responses indicated that there is “no benefit” to the project, this was a smaller proportion compared to the 2014 result. It is important to note that two out of five respondents (40%) did not know, or otherwise did not provide a response regarding benefits of the project.

About half of respondents indicated that no one in their household has been directly affected by the Port Granby Project (53%), while 17% did not know if they have been directly affected, 23% felt they have been negatively affected, and 9% indicated they have been positively affected (Chart 6-27). Respondents from the Close Zone were more likely than those from the Far Zone to report that they or someone in their household have been negatively affected by the Port Granby Project. The most commonly mentioned negative effect was decreasing property value (either actual or expected) (Table 6-30).

Overall, survey respondents were more confident that the Port Granby Project can minimize the potential impacts of light pollution (70% “very confident” or “somewhat confident”), compared to minimizing the impacts of noise (57%), traffic (55%), and dust (50%) (Table 6-30). However, compared to 2014, confidence in the project’s ability to minimize all four impacts has increased.

Property Value Protection Program

About half of the respondents (54%) reported that they own property within the Property Value Protection (PVP) Program zone (Table 6-36); however, only 30% overall reported being “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar” with the PVP program (Table 6-39). Respondents from the Close Zone were more likely than those from the Far Zone to indicate they were “very familiar” with the PVP Program.

Similar to the findings in 2011 and 2014, only 13% of respondents in 2016 indicated that they are “very confident” or “somewhat confident” that the PVP Program will compensate for decrease of property value (Table 6-42).

Communications

Independent qualified scientists (34%) and PHAI staff (24%) were the top two “first choice” methods of receiving accurate and complete information about the Port Granby Project (Table 6-43).

With respect to PHAI communication, about four out of five respondents (81%) reported being satisfied overall with the PHAI's efforts to provide information about the Port Granby Project (Table 6-50), while about two-thirds (65%) expressed confidence that the PHAI would respond to any concerns they may have (Table 6-53). Four out of five respondents (80%) felt that the Port Granby Project Citizen Liaison Group is important in helping with communication (Table 6-56).

Brochures or newsletters through the mail were the top choice of respondents for receiving information about the Port Granby Project (65% "first choice") (Table 6-57). Just over half of respondents (53%) indicated that they read the Port Granby Project Newsletter "always" and 31% read it "sometimes," while 12% did not recall receiving the newsletter (Table 6-64).

With respect to primary sources of local news, the survey respondents most often relied on Clarington this Week (85%), followed by Orono Weekly Times (38%) and KX 96 FM (22%), both of which appear to have increased since the previous year as primary sources of local news (Table 6-67).