

Public Attitude Research Regarding the Port Hope Area Initiative

Port Hope Project

Wave 3

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 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. In Port Hope the project also includes cleanup of several contaminated sites in various locations throughout the town, including Port Hope harbour. The projects together are called the Port Hope Area Initiative and are being conducted on behalf of the federal government by the Low-level Radioactive Waste Management Office.

As part of the Port Hope Area Initiative, the Low Level Radioactive Waste Management Office (LLRWMO) has commissioned periodic public attitude research to monitor public awareness of the PHAI, identify issues and concerns, and provide data regarding public attitudes and behaviours to be used as part of the socio-economic impact assessment of the projects. This report presents the findings of a third wave (W3) of telephone surveying carried out among the general public in the Municipality of Port Hope, Wards 1 and 2 during May 2004. The first wave (W1) was undertaken among area residents in February 2002 and the second (W2) in April 2003.

It should be noted that the context in which this survey was conducted varied somewhat from previous waves in the following manner:

- The research was undertaken shortly after the LLRWMO released its recommended concept for a long-term low-level radioactive waste management facility just south of Hwy 401 and west of Baulch Rd where the Welcome Waste Management Facility and an auto recycling yard are now located;
- In 2004, the sponsor of the survey (LLRWMO) was identified at the outset, whereas in previous surveys, it was not identified until later in the survey questionnaire;
- The simultaneous conduct of a survey by Cameco on its operations and a controversial proposal to use enhanced uranium in the Port Hope plant was well publicized throughout the Port Hope and area community; and
- This survey included many additional questions designed to assess respondents' expectations about how the proposed facility might affect their behaviour and satisfaction levels, by asking about their use and enjoyment of specific community services and facilities.

Key findings from the 2004 survey include:

- Overall, eight-in-ten respondents claim to know at least something about the presence of low-level radioactive waste (82%) and radioactive waste management

facilities (79%) in their community. Nevertheless, living in a community with radioactive waste management facilities and areas where there is radioactive contaminated soil is not something people dwell upon. Six-in-ten respondents (61%) either ‘never’ or ‘not very often’ think about this fact. (Tables 5.1-1 and 5.1-2)

- There are a number of community issues on the minds of respondents. However, the presence of radioactive waste is the most frequently named top issue in the community (27%) and is the thing that contributes most to a negative image of the community (29%). This indicates that, although residents of the community do not think about radioactive waste in their community regularly, when asked, it does come to mind as an important issue. This awareness could also be attributed to the extensive publicity around the PHAI in recent years. Other top issues facing the community are population and industrial growth (14%), hospitals and health care (12%), and unemployment, lack of economic growth (12%). (Tables 3.2, 3.3)
- Only 6% of the survey respondents in Port Hope indicate that they do not feel secure living in their community. Approximately 11% of all respondents specifically identify the presence of radioactive waste as a thing or issue most affecting their feelings of personal security. (Tables 4.1-1 and 4.1-2). Of the 21 respondents who do not feel secure, 5 of them name the presence of radioactive waste.

Twenty percent (20%) of all respondents provide a fair or poor rating on their sense of health and sense of well-being. Eleven per cent (11%) name radioactive waste as an issue or thing that affects their feelings of health and sense of well-being and 4% name health concerns related to radioactive contamination. Other more frequently named issues mentioned are limited health care services (14%), and doctor shortages (8%). (Tables 4.1-3 and 4.1-4)

- There is a significant increase in overall awareness of the PHAI, with 69% reporting being “somewhat” or “very” aware compared to 62% in 2003. Similar percentages of respondents report awareness of the Port Granby Waste Management Facility (71%), a level that is significantly higher compared to 2003 (62%), the Highland Drive Temporary Storage Site in Port Hope (70%), a significant increase over 2003 (56%), and the Welcome Waste Management Facility (64%) in Port Hope, no change compared to 2003. (Table 5.3-1)
- The majority of respondents (67%) are at least somewhat confident that the waste can be safely managed at the recommended facility for the long term. The level of comfort is similar to that of previous years. (Table 6.1-1)

More people now are able to express concerns about the proposed facility than in previous years when the project was more conceptual. Only 9% state that they have no concerns compared to 16% in 2003. The most frequent issues mentioned relate to concerns about transporting the waste from the excavated area to the new facility (19%), leakage from the facility that will affect the ground water (13%), and the

ability to safely and securely manage the waste (10%). Thirty-one percent (31%) of the respondents would be more confident about the safety of the facility or their concerns would be lessened if they were assured that the facility was closely monitored/tested (14%), and if safety and protection/site security were addressed (17%); 24% would be more confident if they were informed about and had input into the decisions. (Table 6.2-1, 6.2-2)

- Residents of the Municipality of Port Hope are satisfied with living in their community (94%). Indeed 64% are “very” satisfied, a finding that is stable with previous years. Somewhat fewer respondents are “very committed” to living in their community (65%) or continuing in the agriculture industry (67%). 83% of respondents who identified themselves as owners or managers of a commercial or industrial business are “very committed” to running their business in the community. (Tables 3.1-1, 4.2)
- Thirty-four per cent (34%) of area residents use parks, beaches, and trails along the waterfront and Lakeshore Road “regularly” and 36% visit or participate in activities and programs at the local community and recreation centres or facilities. Significantly fewer respondents go boating on local rivers and Lake Ontario “regularly” (13%) or use the parks and trails near Highland Drive ravine (13%). (Table 4.3)
- The vast majority of respondents are not likely to change their attitudes or behaviours either positively or adversely as a result of the activities associated with implementation of the recommended Port Hope facility.

The majority of respondents do not anticipate a change in their feelings of **health and sense of well-being** as a result of the excavation (60%), transportation (63%) or facility development (64%) activities. The anticipated changes, both adverse and positive, from each activity are small – excavation (11% adverse, 22% positive), transportation (21% adverse, 12% positive), and facility development (12% adverse, 21% positive). (Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3-1)

Over 80% of respondents do not anticipate a change in the use and enjoyment of their **property** due to the excavation (83%), transportation (83%) or facility development (84%) activities. The anticipated changes, both adverse and positive, from each activity are small – excavation (7% adverse, 6% positive), transportation (11% adverse, 3% positive), and facility development (7% adverse, 5% positive). (Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3-1)

The majority of Port Hope respondents do not anticipate a change in their use and enjoyment of **parks, beaches and trails** during the excavation (67%), transportation (76%) or facility development (78%) activities. The anticipated changes, both adverse and positive, from each activity are small – excavation (16% adverse, 13% positive), transportation (15% adverse, 6% positive), and facility development (7% adverse, 15% positive). (Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3-1)

Respondents are not anticipating a change in their **fishing and boating** activities on local rivers and Lake Ontario as a result of excavation (86%) activities. About 7% anticipate an adverse change and 4% anticipate a positive change. (Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3-1)

Over 80% of Port Hope respondents do not anticipate a change in their use and enjoyment of **the community and recreational centres and facilities** during the excavation (84%), transportation (84%) or facility development (85%) activities. The anticipated changes, both adverse and positive, from each activity are small – excavation (5% adverse, 7% positive), transportation (9% adverse, 5% positive), and facility development (5% adverse, 8% positive). (Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3-1)

Seventy-nine percent (79%) of the Port Hope respondents state that the proposed excavation, transportation, and facility development activities will not change their decision to **live in the community**. (Table 7.3-2)

Three-quarters (71%) do not expect that their feeling of **personal security** would change, relative to their feelings today, after the cleanup work is completed and the facility is permanently closed. About 15% anticipate that their feelings of personal security will increase.

There is a significant decline from 60% in 2002 and 68% in 2003 to 47% of respondents in 2004 anticipating that their **satisfaction with living in the community** would go up with the completion of the facility. (Table 7.4-2)

The majority of respondents anticipate that the presence of the facility would not change significantly their **commitment** to running a business (81%), farming (81%), or living in the community (78%). 12% indicate that they would be “somewhat” (7%) or “very” (5%) likely to move as a result of the project, 4% anticipate that they would cease running their business, and 4% anticipate that they would likely stop farming. (Tables 7.4-4)

- Overall, 51% of respondents rate the LLRWMO as doing a “good” or “very good” job of addressing questions people may have about its activities, a significant increase from 2002 but comparable to ratings given in 2003. (Table 5.4-1)