

# **Public Attitude Research Regarding the Port Hope Area Initiative**

*Port Hope Project*

*Wave 5*

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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 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 Port Hope Project is part of the Port Hope Area Initiative and is being conducted on behalf of the federal government by the Low-level Radioactive Waste Management Office.

After four years of study and community consultation, the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Office has 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.

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, determine communications needs of the public, and provide data regarding public attitudes and behaviours. This report presents the findings of a fifth wave of telephone surveying carried out among the general public in Wards 1 and 2 of Port Hope during November 2006. The first wave was undertaken among area residents in February 2002, the second in April 2003, the third in May 2004, and the fourth in October 2005.

## 1.2 KEY FINDINGS

Key findings from the 2006 survey include:

- Over eight-in-ten respondents claim to know at least something about the presence of low-level radioactive waste (83%) in their community, with a significantly higher percentage than in previous years reporting to be “very knowledgeable”.

However, living in a community dealing with radioactive waste management facilities is not something people dwell upon. Almost eight-in-ten respondents (78%) “never” or “not very often” think about this fact, and the percentage who thinks about it “very often” or “often” has declined significantly over time. (Tables 4.2, 4.1-1)

- Moreover, one issue has surpassed the total mention of low-level radioactive waste as the most dominant issue in public opinion. The top issue is “unemployment and the lack of economic growth” (30%).

Topics related to radiation are the next most frequently mentioned issues facing the community (25%), comprised of: radioactive waste (14%), relocation of the low-level radioactive waste (7%), radioactivity /

radiation without attributing a source (2%), and people complaining about the low-level radioactive waste (2%). A further 16% name an issue related to radioactive waste as the community characteristic they like the least. (Tables 3.1, 3.2-2)

- The LLRWMO continued to receive positive assessments regarding its public communications efforts, with significant increases noted at the highest rating levels over time. Moreover, assessments of communications and familiarity with Port Hope Project News are positively correlated with most of the attitudes about the presence of the low-level radioactive waste and the processes related to dealing with the waste.
  - ◆ About two-thirds of the respondents (63%) provide a “very good” or “good” assessment of the manner in which the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Office is addressing questions about its activities. (Tables 6.2-1)
  - ◆ 75% are familiar with *Port Hope Project News*. (Table 6.3-1)
  - ◆ Respondents are satisfied with accessibility of the information about the Port Hope project (85%) and the manner in which they were able to provide input into the environmental assessment studies (77%). (Tables 6.1, 4.3-3)
  - ◆ Three-quarters (75%) are now familiar with the environmental assessment studies carried out over the past four years to determine the most appropriate ways to clean up the low-level radioactive waste in Port Hope compared to two-thirds in 2005. (Table 4.3-1)
  - ◆ However, there still is room for improvement on awareness of the Property Value Protection program. Overall, half (53%) have heard of the PVP program, but only 40% in Ward 2 make that claim. This may relate to the fact that the PVP zone covers less than 25% of Ward Two. 83% of all respondents believe that the program “completely” or “somewhat” protects residents against losses in property value. (Tables 4.4)
- Port Hope residents continue to have a good level of confidence in the PHAI.
  - ◆ Three-quarters (73%) are at least “somewhat” confident that the waste can be safely managed at the recommended facility for the long term, with the proportion who are “very confident” at its highest level to-date. (Table 5.1-1).
  - ◆ Seven-in-ten respondents (71%) support the recommendations of the municipality’s citizen advisory committee that both active and passive recreational uses should be provided at the storage site. One-quarter (21%) are opposed to the recommendations. The survey did not pursue reasons for this opposition, but correlation analysis indicates that these are people who have less confidence that the waste can be safely managed at the recommended facility over the long term. (Table 5.2)
- Several findings emerge that will assist the LLRWMO in the future.

- ◆ Readership of *Port Hope Project News* is strong; 49% “always” and 33% “sometimes” read it. (Table 6.3-2)
- ◆ Brochures / newsletters mailed to them (mentioned by 58%) continue to be the preferred sources of information about the Port Hope Initiative. However, there is also an increased emphasis on radio, newspaper and television advertising (36%) and articles in the newspaper (34%). (Table 6.4)
- ◆ The issues of most concern continue to be transporting the waste (mentioned by 17%) and public safety / health (11%). Keeping the public informed (19%) and plant monitoring/testing/inspecting (16%) are key activities that would assist in improving confidence. (Table 5.3-1, 5.3-2)

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 BACKGROUND

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, slightly contaminated soils 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 Port Hope Project is part of the Port Hope Area Initiative (PHAI) and is 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, determine communications needs of the public, and provide data regarding public attitudes and behaviours to be used as part of the socio-economic impact assessment of the projects.

Throughout the study period, Port Hope and Ward 4 Clarington residents have been sent newsletters outlining the recommendation to relocate the Port Hope and Port Granby waste to two facilities, one in each community, and there has been coverage of the recommendation in the local media. In the case of Port Hope, after four years of study and community consultation, the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Office has recommended the relocation of all the Port Hope waste to one new modern waste management facility located just south of Hwy 401 and west of Baulch Rd. This recommendation has been accepted by the Municipality of Port Hope and is now under review by the federal authorities.

This report presents the findings of the fifth wave telephone survey carried out among the general public in Wards 1 and 2 in Port Hope during November 2006. The first wave (was undertaken among area residents in February 2002, the second in April 2003, and the third in May 2004, and the fourth in October 2005.

### 2.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the current wave of research were to:

- Identify area residents' attitudes towards and perceptions of their community including major issues facing their community, and what they like most and least about their community;
- Identify levels of knowledge about the presence of low-level radioactive waste in the community;

- Assess levels of familiarity with, and attitudes toward the various PHAI programs and the Port Hope Project studies and findings;
- Gauge people's confidence in the ability of the PHAI to safely manage the waste at a location specifically designed for that purpose over the long-term;
- Gauge the levels of support and opposition regarding the recommended recreational uses of the proposed site;
- Determine the main concerns people have with the PHAI and the actions that can be taken to make them more confident about the safety of the facility;
- Identify awareness and assessments of the Property Value Protection Program;
- Gauge the success of the LLRWMO in addressing questions people have about its activities;
- Examine communications needs including the most accurate, complete and preferred sources of information and familiarity with the Port Hope Project Newsletter; and
- Identify changes in knowledge, attitudes and information needs regarding low-level radioactive waste and the PHAI over the past five years.

A questionnaire was developed for telephone administration that took approximately 11 minutes to administer and contained 23 questions, including 5 open-ended questions. A copy of the questionnaire is included in the Technical Appendix. Only adult residents 18 years of age or older qualified for the survey. The sample was split equally between men and women.

A total of 351 interviews were completed in Port Hope during the period November 16 - 19, 2006. The sample was drawn disproportionate to the population distribution such that 251 interviews were completed in Ward 1 Port Hope, and 100 were completed in Ward 2 Port Hope. The confidence interval for 251 interviews is  $\pm 6.3\%$ , 19 times out of 20 (also referred to as the 95% significance level), and for 100 interviews is  $\pm 10\%$ . The weighted sample of 351 for the Municipality of Port Hope yields results that are accurate within  $\pm 5.4\%$ , 19 out of 20 times. The Technical Appendix contains the sample details.

The analysis examined the data to determine whether there were differences between two or more samples or respondent segments:

- The independent z-test was used to determine significant differences between two or more samples for the 2005 data. This included a determination of whether there were significant differences between

Ward 1 and Ward 2. The significance level of 95% was used. The report notes when there are significant differences.

- The same statistic was used to determine whether there are differences for the total Port Hope sample and the Ward 1 and Ward 2 samples over time. Two significance levels were used –
  - ◆ 95%. Where there are significant differences at the 95% level, these changes in percent are reported as a “significant difference”.
  - ◆ 90%. This significance level is less stringent than the 95% level and hence the conclusion of a significant difference over time is more prone to error. Percentage changes at this lower level of 90% are noted as “directional”