

Public Attitude Research Regarding the Port Hope Area Initiative

Port Hope Project

Wave 6

December 2007

Prepared for: Low-Level Radioactive Waste
Management Office
5 Mill Street South
Port Hope, ON
L1A 2S6

Prepared by: Haussmann Consulting Inc.
435 Roehampton Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
M4P 1S3
hausson@rogers.com

In association with:
IntelliPulse Inc.
Public Affairs and Marketing
Research

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 five years of study and community consultation, the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Office (LLRWMO) 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. The Municipality of Port Hope, Natural Resources Canada, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and Fisheries and Oceans Canada have 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. The LLRWMO is now in the process of preparing documentation for the required regulatory approvals to proceed with the Project.

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 sixth wave of telephone surveying carried out among the general public in Wards 1 and 2 of Port Hope during October - November 2007. The first wave was undertaken among area residents in February 2002, followed by studies in April 2003, May 2004, October 2005, and November 2006.

1.2 KEY FINDINGS

Key findings from the 2007 survey include:

- Satisfaction with living in their community continues to be high, with 72% of residents surveyed stating that they are "very satisfied". Table 3.1-1)
- Eight-in-ten respondents (78%) claim to know at least something about the presence of low-level radioactive waste in their community.

However, living in a community dealing with radioactive waste management facilities is not something people dwell upon. Seven-in-ten respondents (72%) "never" or "not very often" think about this fact. (Tables 4.2, 4.1-1)

In 2007 radioactive waste is a top issue in the community with 27% in total mentioning one of the following: radioactive waste (17%), relocation of the low-level radioactive waste (6%), radioactivity / radiation without attributing a source (2%), and people complaining about the low-level radioactive waste (2%). A further 14% name an issue related to radioactive waste as the community characteristic they like the least, and 37% mention "radioactive waste" or "low-level radioactive waste" as having the most negative effect on their community's image. (Tables 3.2, 3.3-2, 3.3-3)

The second most frequent top issue facing their community is "unemployment and the lack of economic growth" (21%).

- 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 LLRWMO's communications and readership of 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 (61%) 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)
 - ◆ Awareness of the Port Hope Area Initiative (86%) and the Port Hope Project (73%) is high. (Table 4.3-1)
 - ◆ Respondents are satisfied with accessibility of the information about the Port Hope project (83%) and the manner in which they were able to provide input into the environmental assessment studies (78%). (Tables 6.1, 4.3-5)
 - ◆ Two-thirds (69%) are familiar with the environmental assessment studies carried out over the past five years to determine the most appropriate ways to clean up the low-level radioactive waste in Port Hope, no change from previous years. (Table 4.3-3)
 - ◆ There is strong agreement on the need for the Property Protection Program (70%), although only half of the respondents (50%) are aware of the PVP program. 91% of respondents who are aware of the PVP program believe that the program "completely" or "somewhat" protects residents against losses in property value. (Tables 4.4-1, 4.4-2)
- Port Hope residents continue to have a good level of confidence in the PHAI.
 - ◆ Three-quarters (75%) are at least "somewhat" confident that the waste can be safely managed at the recommended facility for the long term, with 4-in-10 continuing to be "very confident". (Table 5.1-1).
 - ◆ Six-in-ten respondents (65%) 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-third (33%) 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 5.2-1)

- Several findings emerge that will assist the LLRWMO in the future.
 - ◆ Readership of *Port Hope Project News* slipped compared to 2005 and 2006; 29% “always” and 35% “sometimes” read it. (Table 6.3-2)
 - ◆ Brochures / newsletters mailed to them (mentioned by 63%) continue to be the preferred sources of information about the Port Hope Initiative. However, there is an increased emphasis on the Internet (26%) particularly among those who are younger than 35 years of age (35%). (Table 6.4)
 - ◆ The issue of most concern continues to be “transporting the waste” (mentioned by 19%) followed by “site location issues” (11%). “Keeping the public informed” (33%) and addressing “facility management related” issues (24%) are key activities that would assist in improving confidence. (Table 5.3-1, 5.3-3)