

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

*Port Hope Project*

*Wave 7*

**November 2008**

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

*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 the 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 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 Port Hope Area Initiative 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 seventh wave of telephone surveying carried out among the general public in Wards 1 and 2 of Port Hope during October - November 2008. The first wave was undertaken among area residents in February 2002, followed by studies in April 2003, May 2004, October 2005, November 2006 and November 2007.

### **1.2 KEY FINDINGS UPDATE**

Key findings from the 2008 survey include:

- Satisfaction with living in their community reached its highest level in tracking, with 76% stating that they are “very satisfied”. (Table 3.1-1)
- Eight-in-ten respondents (85%) claim to know at least something about the presence of low-level radioactive waste in their community. (Table 4.2)

However, living in a community dealing with radioactive waste management facilities is not something people dwell upon. Seven-in-ten respondents (78%) continue to “never” or “not very often” think about this fact. (Tables 4.1-1)

- In 2008 radioactive waste is the most frequently mentioned issue facing the community with 23% in total mentioning one of the following: radioactive waste (18%), relocation of the low-level radioactive waste (1%), radioactivity / radiation without attributing a source (1%), and people complaining about the low-level radioactive waste (3%). A further 7% name an issue related to radioactive waste as the community characteristic they like least and 27% 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 frequently mentioned issue facing this community is “unemployment and the lack of economic growth” (20%).

- The LLRWMO continues to receive positive assessments regarding its public communications efforts, with significant increases noted at the highest rating levels over time. Effectiveness of the LLRWMO communications is rated higher among respondents who have a higher level of self-reported knowledge about the presence of low-level radioactive waste in their community, higher satisfaction with the manner in which residents have been able to make input into the Project, higher support level for recommended uses of the site and higher perception that the Property Value Protection Program protects residents against losses in property values.
  - ◆ Two-thirds of the respondents (66%) 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 (69%) is high. (Table 4.3-1)
  - ◆ Respondents are satisfied with accessibility of the information about the Port Hope Project (81%) and the manner in which they were able to provide input to the Project (67%). (Tables 6.1, 4.3-5)
- There is strong agreement on the need for the Property Value Protection Program (70%), although only half of the respondents (50%) are aware of the PVP Program. 85% of all respondents 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 high level of confidence in the PHAI.
  - ◆ Three-quarters (78%) continue to be at least “somewhat” confident that the waste can be safely managed at the recommended facility for the long term, with almost 5-in-10 continuing to be “very confident”. (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 (26%) 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; 31% “always” and 38% “sometimes” read it. (Table 6.3-2)
  - ◆ Brochures / newsletters mailed to them (mentioned by 57%) continue to be the preferred sources of information about the Port Hope Initiative. Responses also indicate a need for a variety of media: articles or stories in the local media (32%), advertising (31%), public open houses (22%), and Internet web site (21%) were mentioned as also being preferred information sources. (Table 6.4-1)
  - ◆ Several concerns about the proposed initiative are identified: “transporting the waste” (mentioned by 14%), “leakage of contaminants” (11%), and “length of time it will take” (11%). (Table 5.3-1)
  - ◆ Respondents mentioned good communications (34%) and facility management related issues (25%) as key activities that would assist in improving confidence. (Table 5.3-2, 5.3-3)