

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

*Port Hope Project*

*Wave 8*

**November 2009**

Prepared for: Port Hope Area Initiative Management Office  
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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 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 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. In October 2009 the CNSC granted AECL a five year license to undertake the Port Hope Project.

As part of the Port Hope Area Initiative (PHAI), AECL 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 the eighth wave of telephone surveying carried out among the general public in Wards 1 and 2 of Port Hope during November 2009. The first wave was undertaken among area residents in February 2002, followed by studies in April 2003, May 2004, October 2005, November 2006, October 2007 and October 2008.

### 1.2 KEY FINDINGS UPDATE

Key findings from the 2009 survey include:

- Port Hope residents continue to be satisfied with living in their community, with 71% stating that they are "very satisfied" and over 90% are "very" or "somewhat" satisfied. (Table 3.1-1)
- In 2009 radioactive waste is the most frequently mentioned issue facing the community with 33% in total mentioning one of the following: relocation of the low-level radioactive waste (20%), radioactive waste (13%), radioactivity / radiation without attributing a source (3%), and people complaining about the low-level radioactive waste (2%). (Table 3.2-1) The following results shed additional light on this finding:

- ◆ 63% say the cleanup of low-level radioactive waste is a “very important” issue and almost everyone says it is important. (Table 3.3-2)
- ◆ 75% claim to know at least something about the presence of low-level radioactive waste in their community. (Table 4.2-1)
- ◆ Living in a community dealing with radioactive waste management facilities is not something people dwell upon. 75% continue to “never” or “not very often” think about this fact. (Tables 4.1-1)
- ◆ 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 40% “very confident”. (Table 5.1-1).
- ◆ The second most frequently mentioned issue facing this community is “unemployment and the lack of economic growth” (mentioned by 25%).
- Awareness of low-level radioactive waste and the public’s favourable responses to it and the Port Hope Area Initiative may be attributed to PHAI communications activities. The PHAI continues to receive positive assessments regarding its public communications efforts.
  - ◆ 60% of the respondents provide a “very good” or “good” assessment of the manner in which the PHAI is addressing questions about its activities. (Tables 6.2-1)
  - ◆ Awareness of the Port Hope Area Initiative (87%) and the Port Hope Project (67%) is high. (Table 4.3-1)
  - ◆ Respondents are satisfied with accessibility of the information about the Port Hope Project (82%) and the manner in which they were able to provide input to the Project (67%). (Tables 6.1-1, 4.3-3)
  - ◆ However, only 41% are familiar with the Property Value Protection Program. Indeed, knowledge levels are such that 45% of the respondents who claim to have some familiarity with the Program can not suggest an improvement because they “are not familiar enough” with the Program. (Table 4.4-2, 4.4-3)
- Several findings emerge that will assist the PHAI-MO in the future.
  - ◆ Brochures / newsletters mailed to them (mentioned by 46%) continue to be the preferred sources of information about the Port Hope Area Initiative. Responses also indicate a need for a variety of media: articles or stories in the local media (25%), advertising (20%), public open houses (19%), and PHAI web site (19%) were mentioned as also being desired information sources. (Table 6.4-1)

- ◆ Several concerns about the proposed initiative continue to be the most frequently identified: "transporting the waste" (mentioned by 12%), "managed for safety of storage / security" (12%), "leakage of contaminants" (9%), and "length of time it will take" (9%). (Table 5.3-1)