

Public Attitude Research Regarding the Port Hope Area Initiative

Port Hope Project

Wave 11

December 2012

Prepared for: Port Hope Area Initiative Management Office
5 Mill Street South
Port Hope, ON
L1A 2S6

Prepared by: IntelliPulse Inc.
Public Affairs and
Marketing Research

In association with:

Hausmann Consulting Inc.
435 Roehampton Ave.
Toronto, Ontario
M4P 1S3

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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 projects include engineering and environmental assessment studies, public consultation, a property value protection program, hosting fees to the municipalities, construction of facilities, and ongoing monitoring. The Port Hope Project (PHP) is part of the Port Hope Area Initiative (PHAI), which is being conducted on behalf of the federal government by the Port Hope Area Initiative Management Office (PHAI MO), which took over lead responsibility for the PHAI in 2009 from the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Office (LLRWMO).

After five years of study and community consultation, the LLRWMO 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. in the Municipality of Port Hope. The Municipality of Port Hope and the federal Responsible Authorities (Natural Resources Canada, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and Fisheries and Oceans Canada) 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 licence to undertake the Port Hope Project. Since then, AECL (the corporate parent of PHAI MO) has assumed responsibility for the operation of the existing Welcome Waste Management Facility, completed detailed designs and remediation plans, constructed a dedicated access road to the new long-term facility site and begun the radiological survey of public and private properties in Port Hope. AECL has also completed all of the required compliance and technical documents, ranging from occupational health and safety to radiation protection and emergency plans, while continuing to extensively engage the Municipality of Port Hope and the community at large. In November 2012, the CNSC approved AECL's licence amendment application for a ten-year licence that will permit the remediation of historic low-level radioactive waste and the completion of the Port Hope Project.

As part of the Port Hope Area Initiative (PHAI), AECL has commissioned annual 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 eleventh wave of telephone surveying carried out among the general public in Wards 1 and 2 of Port Hope during November - December 2012. 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, October 2008, November 2009, November 2010, December 2011 and October 2012.

1.2 Key Findings

Key findings from the 2012 survey include:

- Port Hope residents continue to be satisfied with living in their community, with 67% stating that they are “very satisfied” and over 90% that they are “very” or “somewhat” satisfied. (Table 3.1-1)
- “Crime / drugs/ vandalism / policing” is the top issue facing the community in 2012 (37%), displacing to second position “relocation / clean-up / transfer of low-level radioactive waste to the PHAI facility” (21%). (Table 3.2-1) Collectively, radioactive waste issues are named by 38% of respondents in total including relocation and clean-up of the waste, “the presence of radioactive waste” (9%), “decrease in property values” (6%), and “radioactivity / radiation” without attributing a source (2%).
 - ◆ Nonetheless, 57% say the cleanup of low-level radioactive waste is a “very important” issue and 84% say it is “somewhat” or “very” important. (Table 3.3)
- Awareness and attitude findings in 2012 have remained largely favourable and consistent with past findings and in some cases have reached new peaks. In particular:
 - ◆ 85% claim to know at least something about the presence of low-level radioactive waste in their community. (Table 4.1-1)
 - ◆ Living in a community dealing with radioactive waste management facilities is not something people dwell upon. 77% “never” or “not very often” think about this fact. (Tables 4.3.1)
 - ◆ 85% are “very” or “somewhat” confident that the waste can be safely managed at the recommended facility for the long term, with 47% “very confident”. Overall, confidence levels (very or somewhat confident) have risen gradually from 65% in 2002 to 85% in 2012. (Table 5.1-1).
 - ◆ Awareness of the Port Hope Area Initiative (95%) remains high, and awareness of the Port Hope Project (84%) is at an all-time high. (Table 4.2-1)
 - ◆ 68% of respondents say they are familiar with the Property Value Protection Program (PVPP) (Table 4.4-2). Familiarity is highest among respondents who report owning property in the Municipality of Port Hope on or south of Dale Road/County Road 2, than among respondents who report not owning property in this Zone (72% vs. 59%).
 - Asked for the first time, 64% report having confidence in the PVP Program to minimize potential negative effects of the project on property values. (Table 4.4-4)

- ◆ 85% of the respondents report being “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with the manner in which the PHAI provides information about its activities (Table 6.1), and 81% feel that they have had adequate opportunities to provide input to the Project (Table 6.3-1). These findings show satisfaction levels have returned to earlier levels after two years of decline.
- ◆ 29% of respondents volunteer that they have “no safety concerns” when asked to name an action that could be taken to increase their confidence in the safety of the new long-term facility. This represents a significant increase over all previous survey findings. The specific action most likely to increase confidence is “closely monitor, test, maintain and inspect” the facility (25%), while there is a decline in the response “inform residents honestly / provide regular updates / publish information via brochures, website, media” (17%). (Table 5.2-3)
- Awareness of low-level radioactive waste and the public’s favourable attitude towards the Port Hope Area Initiative may be attributed to PHAI communications activities. Communications topics from the PHAI important for maintaining favourable attitudes are:
 - ◆ A clear majority of respondents are confident that the project will be able to minimize the effects of traffic (79%), dust (71%), and general nuisance effects (77%). (Table 5.1-4)
 - ◆ The most frequently mentioned concerns continue to be “transporting / removing waste - spills, accidents, dust” (24%) followed by the “length of time it will take” (14%), “storage methods” (12%) and “contamination of soil, water, air / leakage” (10%). (Table 5.2-1)
 - ◆ 95% have heard about plans to clean up some residences and other sites contaminated with low-level radioactive waste and 94% have heard about plans to transport contaminated soil to the new long-term waste management facility along designated routes. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of respondents who report having heard about plans to do a radiation re-survey of every property. Awareness of the radiation re-survey has increased by a factor of two in Ward 1 (83% vs. 38% in 2011) and by 50% in Ward 2 (61% vs. 38% in 2011). (Table 4.2-3)
- Several findings emerge relevant to PHAI MO future communications initiatives:
 - ◆ The staff of the PHP or PVPP (45%), the PHAI website (36%), the Municipality of Port Hope (32%), and Real Estate Agents (32%) are the most frequently named sources of information about the PVPP. (Table 4.4-3).
 - ◆ 56% of respondents name the staff of the PHAI (37%) and the PHAI website (19%) as the sources trusted most to provide accurate and complete information about the PHAI. Less frequently named are the Municipality of Port Hope (22%), federal government agencies (16%)

and local media (15%). One-third name independent qualified scientists (31%). (Table 6.2-2)

- ◆ Newsletters or brochures mailed to residents (mentioned by 61%) are the preferred sources of information about the Port Hope Area Initiative. Responses also indicate a need for a variety of media: newspapers (28%), public meetings or open houses (22%), and electronic updates by email or PHAI web site (23%) were mentioned as also being desired information sources. (Table 6.2-1)
- ◆ One-quarter of respondents report that at some time they have obtained information from the PHAI web site (22%), Twitter (2%) or Facebook (2%). (Tables 6.2-3)