

Public Attitude Research Regarding the Port Hope Area Initiative

Port Granby Project

Wave 3

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 soils contaminated with 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 projects together are called the Port Hope Area Initiative and are 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, and provide data regarding public attitudes and behaviours to be used as part of the socio-economic impact assessment of the projects. This report presents the findings of a third wave (W3) of telephone surveying carried out among the general public in Ward 4 of Clarington during May 2004. The first wave (W1) was undertaken among area residents in February 2002 and the second in April 2003.

It should be noted that the context in which this survey was conducted varied somewhat from previous waves in the following manner:

- The research was undertaken shortly after the LLRWMO released its recommended concept for a long-term radioactive waste management facility north of Lakeshore Road near Port Granby in Ward 4 of the Municipality of Clarington;
- In 2004, the sponsor of the survey (LLRWMO) was identified at the outset, whereas in previous surveys, it was not identified until later in the survey questionnaire;
- This survey included many additional questions designed to assess respondents' expectations about how the proposed facility might affect their behaviour and satisfaction levels, by asking about their use and enjoyment of specific community services and facilities.

Key findings from the 2004 survey include:

- Overall, half of respondents claim to know at least something about the presence of low-level radioactive waste (52%) and radioactive waste management facilities (53%) in their community. Nevertheless, living in a community with radioactive waste management facilities and areas where there is radioactive contaminated soil is not something people dwell upon. Over three-quarters of the respondents (74%) either 'never' or 'not very often' think about this fact. (Tables 5.1 and 5.2-2)

- There are a number of community issues on the minds of respondents. Overall, the top issues facing the community are population and industrial growth (16%), hospitals and health care (13%), and taxes (11%). (Table 3.2)

The presence of radioactive waste is not a top issue in the community. Only one percent of all respondents volunteer this as an issue facing the community, and 5% identify radioactive waste as contributing to a negative image of the community. Only 7% of the survey respondents in Ward 4 Clarington indicate a feeling of personal insecurity, and 5% of all respondents specifically identify the presence of radioactive waste as a thing or issue most affecting their feelings of personal security. (Tables 4.1-1 and 4.1-2)

Eleven percent (11%) of all respondents provide a fair or poor rating on their sense of health and sense of well-being. Only three percent name radioactive waste as an issue or thing that affects their feelings of health and sense of well-being, compared to 28% who mention limited health care services, 22% who mention environmental quality issues and 7% who name the nuclear power station in this regard. (Tables 4.1-3 and 4.1-4)

- There is a significant increase in overall awareness of the PHAI from 2003, increasing from 44% to 59%. The highest awareness is reported for the Port Granby Waste Management Facility (61%), a level that has remained consistent since 2002. Awareness of the Welcome Waste Management Facility (39%) in Port Hope is significantly higher compared to 2002 (30%) and 2003 (26%), and 16% report awareness of the Highland Drive Temporary Storage Site in Port Hope, also a significant increase over 2002 (8%). (Table 5.3)
- The majority of respondents (58%) are at least somewhat confident that the waste can be safely managed at the recommended facility for the long term. However, there is a significant decrease in the overall confidence level compared to 2003 (67%), and it now stands similar to the 2002 level (54%) when the PHAI was first introduced to the broader public. (Table 6.1)

Also, very few respondents compared to previous years state that they have no concerns (10% in 2004, 22% in 2003, 15% in 2002) and more are able to volunteer a concern they have about the recommended facility (84%, 78%, 69% respectively). The most frequent issues mentioned relate to concerns about leakage from the facility that will affect the ground water (16%), the ability to safely and securely manage the waste (14%), and issues related to transporting the waste from the excavated area to the new facility (14%). Forty-four percent (44%) of the respondents would be more confident about the safety of the facility or their concerns would be lessened with more communications and dialogue about the facility. (Table 6.2-1, 6.2-2)

- Residents of Ward 4 of the Municipality of Clarington are satisfied with living in their community (98%). Indeed 74% are “very” satisfied, a significant increase from 59% in 2002. Somewhat fewer respondents are “very committed” to living in their

community (66%). Still fewer are “very committed” to continued farming (58%) or running their business (58%). (Tables 3.1, 4.2)

- Twenty-four per cent (24%) of area residents use parks, beaches, and trails along the waterfront and Lakeshore Road “regularly” and 14% go boating on local rivers and Lake Ontario “regularly”. (Table 4.3)
- The vast majority of respondents are not likely to change their attitudes or behaviours either positively or adversely as a result of the activities associated with implementation of the recommended Port Granby facility.

The majority of respondents do not anticipate a change in their feelings of **health and sense of well-being** as a result of the excavation (58%), transportation (72%) or facility development (72%) activities. The anticipated changes, both adverse and positive, from each activity are small – excavation (17% adverse, 16% positive), transportation (17% adverse, 7% positive), and facility development (11% adverse, 12% positive). (Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3-1)

Over 80% of respondents do not anticipate a change in the use and enjoyment of their **property** due to the excavation (84%), transportation (88%) or facility development (87%) activities. The anticipated changes, both adverse and positive, from each activity are small – excavation (7% adverse, 2% positive), transportation (9%, 1% respectively), and facility development (9% adverse, 2% positive). (Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3-1)

The majority of Ward 4 Clarington respondents do not anticipate a change in their use and enjoyment of **parks, beaches and trails** during the excavation (76%), transportation (80%) or facility development (80%) activities. The anticipated changes, both adverse and positive, from each activity are small – excavation (14% adverse, 16% positive), transportation (16% adverse, 2% positive), and facility development (14% adverse, 5% positive). (Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3-1)

Respondents are not anticipating a change in their **fishing and boating** activities on local rivers and Lake Ontario as a result of excavation (83%) activities. About 10% anticipate an adverse change and 3% anticipate a positive change. (Tables 7.1, 7.2, 7.3-1)

Eighty percent (80%) of the Ward 4 respondents state that the proposed excavation, transportation, and facility development activities would not change their **decision to live in the community**. (Table 7.3-2)

Three-quarters (75%) do not expect that their feeling of **personal security** would change, relative to their feelings today, after the cleanup work is completed and the facility is permanently closed. About 8% anticipate that their feelings of personal security would decrease. (Table 7.4-1)

There is a major shift in attitudes from 24% and 28% of the respondents in previous years to 44% in 2004 stating they are unsure about how completion of the PHAI will affect their level of **satisfaction with living in the community**. Thirty-one percent (31%) of the respondents anticipate that their satisfaction will go up, while 26% anticipate that their satisfaction will go down. (Table 7.4-2)

The majority of respondents anticipate that the presence of the facility will not change significantly their **commitment** to running a business (100%), living in the community (80%), or farming (73%). 15% indicate that they are “somewhat” (9%) or “very” (6%) likely to move as a result of the project, and 16% anticipate that they are likely to stop farming. (Tables 7.4-3)

- Overall, 51% of respondents rate the LLRWMO as doing a “good” or “very good” job of addressing questions people may have about its activities, an insignificant change from 2002 or 2003. (Table 5.4)