Reports ready for public to use

You live near a remediation site and would like to know what kind of construction noise to expect once the cleanup begins. Where can you find the answer?

Since early spring, the Port Hope draft Environmental Assessment Study Report and its 15 supporting documents have been available on CD or in print at the Project Information Exchange (PIE) and the Port Hope Public Library. The documents contain the answer to this question and nearly any other you might have about the Project. All 16 fit on one CD you can browse at home.

So what about noise? Sandy Holmes, who staffs the PIE, can help you find the answer quickly. Noise was studied as part of the atmospheric effects assessment. A quick scan of its table of contents reveals where construction noise is discussed. How to minimize it and proposed follow-up monitoring are explained. Drawings show where noise effects may occur.

To read government agency comments on the study report, please visit the public registry section at the PIE.

Information office opens in new location

The Project Information Exchange (PIE) is moving uptown in Port Hope. The PIE's new location will be close to Highway 401 at 196 Toronto Road, the former location of the Pentecostal church. The move is planned for mid-August.

The federal government bought the property in 2004 to provide an access road to the proposed long-term waste management facility, west of Baulch Road.

The PIE serves as the Port Hope Area Initiative's central communications office. Sandy Holmes staffs the office every weekday afternoon between 1:00 and 5:00 p.m. Residents, prospective homebuyers and researchers are among the people who drop in or phone for a variety of information.

Port Hope Area Initiative

Project Information Exchange
Open 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Monday through Friday

Telephone: 905-885-0291
Toll-free: 1-866-255-2755
Fax: 905-885-0273

email: info@llrwmo.org website: www.llrwmo.org

Publié aussi en français

Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Office

Natural Resources Canada | Ressources naturelles Canada | AECL Atomic Energy of Canada Limited | EACL Énergie atomique du Canada limitée | Canada

Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Office

Summer 2005

Port Hope Project

News

Our Project Information Office is moving. See Page 8 for details.

The Port Hope Long-Term Facility End Use Advisory Committee toured the site of the proposed long-term low-level radioactive waste management facility with Project Manager Gary Vandergaast. See story on page 2.

Port Hope report in federal hands

The federal review of the Environmental Assessment Study Report for the Port Hope Project is underway.

The review began this spring when the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Office (LLRWMO) submitted the 768-page draft study report to the federal Responsible Authorities (Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and Fisheries and Oceans Canada). The report was presented to Port Hope Council and made available to the public (see story on page 8).

The detailed report, with 15 supporting documents, represents the results of three years of studies and public consultation into the project for the cleanup and safe long-term management of historic low-level radioactive waste in the community.

As part of the federal review, technical specialists from a variety of government agencies, including provincial and federal departments of health, environment, transportation and natural resources, reviewed the reports and provided their comments to the Responsible Authorities. The LLRWMO will address the issues and revise the report as needed. The Responsible Authorities will use the revised report as the basis of their screening report on the Project. This will contain the government's findings and conclusions about the environmental effects of the Project. The public will have an opportunity to comment on the draft screening report before it is finalized.

In This Issue

A committee with a vision:

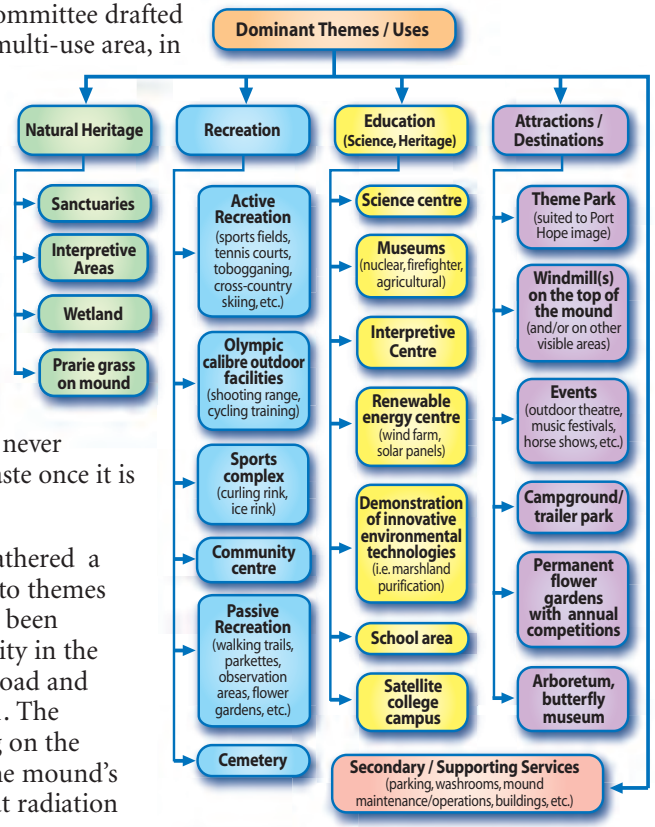
Multi-use facility should 'make the community proud'

With a goal of instilling community pride, a committee of eight council-appointed citizens from Wards 1 and 2 are meeting regularly to develop recommendations for community uses for the long-term low-level radioactive waste management facility after it is completed and closed.

Earlier this year the committee drafted a vision calling for a multi-use area, in accordance with the Legal Agreement, that is innovative and benefits the community. Supporting this are principles such as ensuring public safety, developing uses compatible with the area's long-term planning and assuring the facility is never reopened to accept waste once it is closed.

The committee has gathered a broad mix of ideas into themes (see chart). Uses have been proposed for the facility in the area west of Baulch Road and south of Highway 401. The committee is working on the understanding that the mound's design will ensure that radiation levels at the surface and sides are the same as typical, background levels.

Wider public input will be sought before the committee makes its recommendation to council in late 2005 or early 2006. Any public use of the facility must be approved by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission.



Mayor says Legal Agreement protects the community's interests

Four years ago this spring a Legal Agreement launched the Port Hope Area Initiative. Today, Mayor Rick Austin says it is a "powerful document" that continues to strengthen and guide the Project.

The agreement was signed by the Town of Port Hope, Township of Hope (negotiated before amalgamation), Municipality of Clarington and the federal government to create a framework for the cleanup and long-term safe management of historic low-level radioactive waste in the communities. Mayor Austin told the Canadian Nuclear Society conference in Ottawa this past May that after 30 years of trying to solve the waste problem, there is "light at the end of the tunnel...The Port Hope Area Initiative is a community-based initiative, and we see ourselves as partners in the process."

The Legal Agreement gives the municipalities a partnership role. Even if the municipality once felt like "David about to confront the federal Goliath," the agreement has given the municipality "considerable influence" by requiring municipal consent at key milestones, he told the conference.

Negotiations for the Legal Agreement enabled the municipalities to obtain commitments from the federal government, early in the process, that they believed would protect community interests. Among these was the Property Value Protection Program, which provides financial compensation to property owners if the sale or rental of their property is affected by the Initiative. The agreement also provides hosting fees and additional money so each municipality can hire independent expertise (peer review team) to interpret and question the complex environmental and engineering studies that form the basis of the Project, he said.

Throughout the process, the mayor said council's focus has been to ensure the decisions it makes today protect not only the health and needs of current residents and the environment but the health and needs of future generations. "The last significant challenge…is ensuring that this Project results in a positive legacy."

Mayor Rick Austin addressing the Canadian Nuclear Society conference

Planning for the next phase…construction, cleanup and transportation

LLRWMO clean-up projects across Canada: Far left: Fort McMurray, Alberta, historic waste cleanup; centre: truck tarping in Fort McMurray; right: monitoring trucks at Port Hope's new water treatment plant site.

Building safety into construction practices

A range of design features and construction practices to control dust, prevent the spread of contaminated soil and protect workers, the public and the environment will be rigorously used and monitored at each low-level radioactive waste work site when the construction and clean-up phase of the Port Hope Project begins.

Scheduled to start in 2007, pending approval and licensing, the phase will involve three major activities: construction of the long-term waste management facility, cleanup of contaminated sites and transportation of waste. A combination of internationally recognized practices and specifically designed environmental management methods are being incorporated into the construction design stage to prevent and manage possible effects.

Clean-up specialist Brian Betts, Marshall Macklin Monaghan Limited, says the lessons learned and methods used over two decades of handling low-level radioactive waste provide confidence that the work can be done safely. Applying the techniques diligently, ensuring that crews are trained and supervised and conducting routine and comprehensive monitoring will be critical.

Detailed environmental management plans will be developed to protect the environment. Under these plans, dust control practices, for example, will require that work sites are kept clean, soil is not tracked outside of the work area and excavation areas are kept as small as practical. Soil surfaces will be kept moist and trucks carrying waste will be tightly covered, cleaned and monitored. Equipment used in a work zone will be dedicated to that area until it is cleaned, monitored and released. And although construction activities would be curtailed or stopped in inclement weather, design features such as grading the excavation to direct water away from the waste and installing sumps to collect water for appropriate management avoid problems before they happen.

Every truck will be cleaned, identified and accounted for

Once the cleanup starts, trucks transporting waste will be easy to recognize: each will be marked with clearly visible identification for the Port Hope Area Initiative and a contact phone number. Truck exteriors, wheels and tires will be cleaned and monitored for contamination before leaving work sites. Loads will be sealed to securely contain the waste.

Every shipment will have its own I.D. – a trip ticket (also called a load manifest) issued before leaving a clean-up site. The trip tickets will be checked on arrival at the long-term waste management facility to make sure each load of contaminated material that left a clean-up site was also received. Similar to a courier, the LLRWMO will know the status of every load at all times throughout the day.

Monitoring is constant during construction

Extensive monitoring of air, soil, surface water and groundwater will be part of comprehensive environmental and human health and safety monitoring plans. The monitoring will ensure that targets are met and that special measures designed to control and reduce potential effects are working.

Each work plan will include dust management monitoring programs. During cleanup and construction, air sampling for radioactive and non-radioactive contaminants will provide constant information. This will ensure that exposure to workers on-site and to members of the public off-site meets all acceptable targets. Workers will wear dosimeters to measure radiation dose. Contamination control at work sites will include surface scans of equipment, personnel, equipment and vehicles.

You asked?

How can I find out if and when my property will be cleaned up?

The determination of which properties require cleanup will be made early in the construction and clean-up phase, scheduled to begin around 2007. Once the Port Hope Project receives approval from the federal authorities, a comprehensive radiological resurvey of Ward 1 Port Hope properties will take place. Clean-up criteria will be applied to determine which properties will require remediation. The LLRWMO will notify individual property owners if a property requires cleanup. Neighbourhood communications meetings will be held with residents about when and how the cleanup will proceed in their area.

I live near a historic waste site. How can I find out when the cleanup will take place and for how long?

The LLRWMO has developed a preliminary schedule for cleaning up historic waste sites in Ward 1. This schedule, which is subject to change, assumes the cleanup/construction phase will begin in 2007. For example, it is estimated that it will take approximately six weeks in the fall of 2011 to complete the cleanup at Alexander Ravine, a month during the summer of 2009 for the Strachan Street Consolidation Site and about two months in the fall of 2012 to carry out the work at the Lions Recreation Centre Park. The schedule is available at the Project Information Exchange.

What will my property look like after it's cleaned up?

The LLRWMO will restore properties as closely as possible to their condition prior to a cleanup. If a garden is dug up, it will be replanted or the materials provided without charge. Cleanups may involve the removal of just a small amount of soil or could be more extensive.

How will you know that you've cleaned up all of the waste?

The LLRWMO has extensive knowledge of waste volumes and locations from more than 25 years of managing and monitoring historic low-level radioactive waste in Port Hope. Over the past three years, extensive radiological surveying – an aerial gamma radiation survey and a roadway survey – has added to this knowledge. The radiological resurvey planned for the start of the clean-up phase will confirm and provide even more information. On each property that is cleaned up, surveys will be conducted to ensure that the contaminated soil has been removed and that all Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission standards have been met.

Canada-wide experience benefits Port Hope Project

Michael Owen's perspective on historic low-level radioactive waste extends far beyond Port Hope. He has followed its trail into Canada's north along the historic Northern Transportation Route, working on clean-up projects in places such as Tulita, Hay River, and Fort Smith, Northwest Territories and Fort McMurray, Alberta.

Michael joined the LLRWMO in 1994 as a technical assistant for the Malvern Remedial Project in Scarborough. About 60 residential and commercial properties had been contaminated from historic radium operations. In 1999, he focused his expertise in site assessment, remediation, waste characterization and radiation monitoring on Port Hope's interim waste management, all the while making intermittent trips to cleanups in the north. (See story on page 7.) Today, as a technical supervisor, he works on project-specific cleanups as well as developing work plans and procedures that emphasize worker, public and environmental safety.

LLRWMO: 25 years of experience focuses on public and worker safety

In the 1990s, the LLRWMO identified contamination at sites along the 2,200 km Northern Transportation Route, used by Eldorado from the 1930s to 1960s to ship ore from the Northwest Territories to Fort McMurray, Alberta. Included were sites in Fort McMurray where ore had been loaded on railcars bound for Port Hope.

Since 1982, the LLRWMO has been responsible for safely managing historic low-level radioactive waste across Canada on behalf of the federal government. This experience has led the LLRWMO to develop an approach to environmental protection and public and worker safety that has earned it an international reputation.

Technical supervisor Michael Owen says the LLRWMO's success stems directly from this approach. "It speaks to preparation, pre-planning and adhering to prescriptive procedures. It speaks to years of experience and to the high calibre of people involved in this work — people with a depth of knowledge that is unparalleled."