



Canadian Nuclear Laboratories | Laboratoires Nucléaires Canadiens



**PORT HOPE AREA
INITIATIVE**

Port Hope Project Public Attitude Survey Research Report - Summary

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Prepared by:



Summary

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

As part of the Port Hope Project, periodic public attitude research is commissioned to monitor area residents' level of knowledge and awareness about historic, low-level radioactive waste and the Port Hope Area Initiative (PHAI) projects, identify issues and concerns, determine the communication needs of the public, and provide data regarding public attitudes and preferences.

The most recent iteration of the Port Hope Project Public Attitude Survey in the Fall of 2018 was conducted by CCI Research Inc. on behalf of Canadian Nuclear Laboratories (CNL). A survey was administered by telephone to Urban Ward and Rural Ward residents of Port Hope, who were 18 years of age or older. In an effort to achieve a sample that was representative of the population, age and gender targets were set within each ward. The 2018 survey contained 30 questions, including seven open-ended questions, and took an average of approximately 21 minutes to complete. A total of 398 telephone interviews were completed by landline and 79 were completed by cell phone during the period of October 19th to November 20th, 2018. In addition, the survey introduction offered the option of completing the questionnaire online, and an additional eleven surveys were completed in this manner, for a total of 488 Port Hope surveys. The confidence interval for the overall Port Hope sample is approximately +/-4.4%, 19 times out of 20 (at the 95% confidence level, assuming a random and representative sample).

This report presents the findings for the 2018 Port Hope Project Public Attitude Survey. Comparisons between survey results for Urban and Rural Ward residents and between results for the current year (2018) and the surveys conducted in 2008 - 2016 are discussed throughout this report.

KEY FINDINGS

Satisfaction with Living in the Community

Overall satisfaction with living in the community remains high, with 98% of respondents indicating they are “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied”. Satisfaction levels were similar to 2016, but community residents indicated a higher level of satisfaction in 2018 as compared to 2009-2014. In addition, overall satisfaction was high in both Wards and similar to the levels of satisfaction reported by respondents in the previous survey period in 2016.

Important Community Issues

The current findings show that “relocation / clean up / transfer of low-level radioactive waste to the PHAI facility” was the top issue in the community in 2018, with one-quarter (25%) of respondents identifying this topic in an open-ended format as one of the most important issues facing their community, which represents a significant increase over the previous survey period. In addition, “costs high; housing, etc.” was identified by one-fifth (20%) of respondents, which also represents a significant increase in the proportion of respondents listing this as an important community issue. In contrast, the proportion of community residents identifying “taxes, property taxes, use of tax money” as a top issue decreased markedly from 2016.

The top most important issue that was identified specifically by residents of the Urban Ward was “relocation / clean up / transfer of low-level radioactive waste to the PHAI facility”, mentioned by 27% of respondents. Rural Ward respondents identified “municipal services, town maintenance, infrastructure” as the top issue, with 23% of these residents giving this response. These top issues were mentioned more often by respondents in 2018 than in 2016.

Topics that were mentioned in response to the open-ended question about the most important issue facing the community were top-of-mind for respondents. The cleanup of the low-level radioactive waste appears to be even more important when survey respondents are asked about it more directly, as 86% of respondents overall indicated that the cleanup of low-level radioactive waste was “very important” or “somewhat important”.

Awareness and Knowledge about Low-Level Radioactive Waste in Area

Most respondents indicated that they rarely think about living in a community with a low-level radioactive waste management facility; specifically, about three-quarters of respondents (76%) think about it “not very often” or “never”.

Self-assessed knowledge about the presence of historic low-level radioactive waste in the community appears higher in 2018 than 2016, but similar to prior survey years, with 80% of respondents indicating that they are “very knowledgeable” or “somewhat knowledgeable” about this topic. In addition, respondents from the Urban Ward and the Rural Ward were similarly likely to report that they are “very knowledgeable” or “somewhat knowledgeable” about the presence of historic low-level radioactive waste in the community.

Familiarity with the Port Hope Project

More than nine out of ten Port Hope residents reported awareness of the Port Hope Area Initiative (95%), while three-quarters (75%) reported awareness of the Port Hope Project, and 87% reported awareness of the long-term waste management facility.

Familiarity with the Port Hope Area Initiative is comparable to the awareness levels reported in 2011-2016 and higher than those reported in 2008-2010. Overall awareness of the Port Hope Project has generally remained consistent, with two exceptions: reported familiarity with the Project was higher in 2018 compared to 2009, but lower compared to 2012. In contrast, familiarity with the long-term waste management facility appears to have increased compared to 2014.

Urban and Rural Ward respondents reported similar levels of overall familiarity with the PHAI. However, those who reside in the Urban Ward reported a higher level of awareness of the Port Hope Project and the long-term waste management facility compared to those in the Rural Ward.

More than nine out of ten respondents reported awareness of the plans to clean up some residences and other sites contaminated with the historic low-level radioactive waste (94%). Reported awareness of trucking contaminated soil to the new long-term waste management facility along designated transportation routes (87%) was very similar to that for radiological testing of all urban and a few rural private properties in Port Hope (88%). However, awareness of the radiological testing was higher than it has been in previous survey years. A relatively smaller proportion of residents reported awareness of the requirement that all trucks transporting waste on public roads must be clearly identified with the PHAI logo and

contact information (68%). In addition, Urban Ward residents indicated a greater awareness of all PHAI plans (as identified above) than respondents who were living in the Rural Ward.

Survey respondents were also asked to report their knowledge about the PHAI construction and cleanup activities that are currently underway in the community of Port Hope, and, in response, residents of the Urban Ward were more likely to report they were knowledgeable overall (very knowledgeable + somewhat knowledgeable) than Rural Ward respondents.

Confidence and Concerns Regarding the Port Hope Project

About four out of five of the survey respondents overall (83%) expressed confidence that the waste can be safely managed at the new long-term waste management facility, with 34% indicating they were “very confident” and 49% indicating they were “somewhat confident”. This result is similar to the overall confidence observed in each survey period since 2008.

There were a wide range of diverse issues or concerns about the Port Hope Project identified by respondents, the most common of which were: “transporting / waste removal spills, accidents, traffic” (24%), “find it / clean it all up; quality of clean-up” (17%), “storage methods-safety, containment, liner” (16%), and “contamination of soil / water / air, leakage” (16%). A larger proportion of respondents mentioned “contamination of soil / water / air, leakage” as a concern this year than in 2016.

When asked to indicate whether they have been affected, or anyone in their household has been affected by the Port Hope Project, either positively or negatively, the large majority of respondents (75%) indicated they have not been affected, while 14% indicated they had been positively affected and 8% indicated they had been negatively affected by the Port Hope Project.

Overall, high proportions of respondents expressed confidence that the project can minimize the effects of dust, traffic, and noise (77%, 84%, and 83%, respectively), and confidence that the project can minimize the effects of traffic and noise has increased as compared to 2016.

When asked “how concerned are you about the project’s impact on the natural environment,” about seven out of ten respondents (69%) expressed concern (“very concerned” or “somewhat concerned”), while the remaining 31% reported that they were “not very concerned” or “not at all concerned”. Those expressing concern were then asked to specify what they were concerned about in an open-ended format. Similar to the results of 2016, the most common response in 2018 was related to the effects on “water / run-off / groundwater / leaching into water” (28%). The next most common themes related to specific concerns were “the environment (general)” (21%). This concern was followed by “trees” (21%), “unknown future effects” (20%), and “animals, wildlife” (16%) which were all indicated as environmental issues in 2018 more often as compared to 2016.

When asked to identify the benefits of the Port Hope Project, the most common responses were related to the “cleanup and containment of the radioactive waste” (56%), and the “improvement of the town image / removing the stigma” (27%), both of which were reported more often in 2018 than in 2016. In total, 3% of respondents believed there to be “no benefit” to the project, a decrease compared to the last two survey periods.

Property Value Protection Program

A total of 46% of respondents reported being “very familiar” or “somewhat familiar” with the Property Value Protection (PVP) Program, which is a decline from the 2012 result (note that the number of response options and some of the option names changed in 2016, which may have contributed to this observed difference).

Similar to the findings in 2016, 62% of respondents in 2018 indicated that they are “very confident” or “somewhat confident” that the PVP Program will compensate for decrease of property value.

Communications

When respondents were asked to choose their first and second most trusted sources for providing accurate and complete information about the PHAI, the largest proportion chose CNL Staff working on the PHAI (56%) as their first or second choice. Furthermore, close to half of respondents (46%) reported that they trusted independent qualified scientists to provide accurate and complete information. In addition, about two out of five respondents (39%) chose the Municipality of Port Hope, while just over one out of five identified local media (23%) and local community groups (21%) as their trusted sources to provide accurate and complete information about the PHAI. Rural Ward respondents were more likely to choose “independent qualified scientists” as compared to Urban Ward respondents (54% vs. 43%).

With respect to communication about the PHAI, about four out of five respondents (82%) reported being satisfied overall with CNL’s efforts to provide information about the Port Hope Area Initiative, similar to the ratings for communication about the project in 2016. However, there was a decrease in the proportion of respondents who indicated they were “very satisfied” compared to the last survey period (26% vs. 33%). Furthermore, similar to results obtained regarding responsiveness in 2016, approximately four out of five respondents (81%) indicated they were “very confident” or “confident” that CNL will respond to any concerns they may have.

“Brochures or newsletters through the regular mail” was still the top choice of respondents for receiving information about the Port Hope Project (71%), followed by “public meetings or open houses involving CNL staff” (33%) and “articles or advertising by your local media” (28%). A larger proportion of respondents in 2018 selected “public meetings or open houses involving CNL staff” compared to 2016.

With respect to primary sources of local news, survey respondents most often relied on the Northumberland News (47%). The second most popular source of local news was Northumberlandnews.com (12%).