



News

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Most Port Hope residents believe low-level radioactive waste can be safely managed, public attitude survey finds

PORT HOPE, ONTARIO – The results of a public attitude survey of Port Hope residents show a marked increase in awareness of the Port Hope Area Initiative and increased confidence that the waste can be safely managed for the long-term.

IntelliPulse, a public affairs and marketing research firm, engaged by the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Office (LLRWMO), polled 351 people in Port Hope in October 2005. This was the fourth consecutive year that the LLRWMO had the random telephone survey conducted. The purpose of the annual survey is: to find out how knowledgeable residents are about the Initiative to manage the historic low-level radioactive waste; to identify and track public issues and concerns; and to assess the LLRWMO's performance in meeting the community's needs.

The results show a marked increase in awareness of the Port Hope Area Initiative (82 % compared to 69% in 2004). Similar to 2004, the majority of Port Hope residents (79%) say they know at least something about radioactive waste in their community. Yet living in a community dealing with radioactive waste management issues is not something people dwell on, 71% say they either "never" or "not very often" think about this fact.

Not dwelling on the issue doesn't mean Port Hope residents do not consider it important. Similar to last year, 29% of Port Hope residents identify the presence of historic low-level radioactive waste as a key issue facing the community. The same percentage feels it contributes to a negative image. However, satisfaction with living in Port Hope remains high. Over 90% report being *very* or *somewhat* satisfied with living here.

Confidence that the waste can be safely managed at the proposed long-term management facility has increased significantly. Seventy-three per cent of Port Hope residents say they are *very* to *somewhat* confident, compared to 67% in 2004. Two-thirds (66%) say they are familiar with the studies conducted over the past three years. Analysis of the survey responses indicates that the more knowledge people report having about the project, the more confident they are that the waste can be safely managed.

Sixty-two per cent of Port Hope residents say the LLRWMO does a "very good" or "good" job of addressing their questions. This satisfaction level has gone up steadily over the four years of polling. Over four-fifths of the respondents are satisfied with the accessibility of the information (81% satisfied) and the manner in which they are able to provide input (78%). Eighty-five per cent say their input was considered at least partially by the LLRWMO.

The poll also found that both the LLRWMO and independent scientists are the preferred sources for reliable information about the Port Hope Area Initiative. About 16% of people responding would prefer to get information about the Initiative from a committee of local citizens. Choice of the media as the public's most reliable information source has dropped from 18% in 2003 to 11% in 2005, while preference for information from the federal government has risen from 3% to 8%.

More people have no concerns about the facility than last year (15% vs 9%). The most frequently mentioned concerns relate to public health/safety, transportation, protecting against environmental contamination and safely containing the waste.

The complete public attitude surveys can be reviewed at the new location of the Project Information Exchange at 196 Toronto Road in Port Hope. From 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday visitors can drop-in, discuss their views and pick up information on the Port Hope Area Initiative.

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