

JOIN THE CONVERSATION: ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS THROUGH THE PORT HOPE AREA INITIATIVE'S PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAM

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Abstract

The Port Hope Area Initiative (PHAI) has spent the past 15 years developing and maintaining strong stakeholder relationships within the southern Ontario communities of Port Hope and Port Granby to support one of Canada's largest environmental remediation and restoration projects. Through public information sessions and workshops, stakeholder committees and citizen liaison groups, and electronic communication, the PHAI has created a dialogue about these historic low-level radioactive waste projects and invited all stakeholders to join the conversation.

The PHAI's comprehensive public information program supports the project delivery teams by providing accurate, timely and consistent information to the public to increase stakeholder confidence in the PHAI's ability to safely remediate and manage the waste for the long term, while minimizing disruptions to the communities.

In this paper, members of the PHAI's Communications and Stakeholder Relations teams discuss the components of the public information program, which applies a strategic approach to inform both the general public and target audiences, including residents whose properties will be remediated, school populations near clean-up sites, the business sector and municipal elected officials and staff in the host communities.

Tactics for stakeholder engagement will be covered, including the Project Information Exchange, which provides PHAI staff the opportunity to discuss the projects, face-to-face, with residents and others, answering questions and addressing concerns; door-to-door notification of residents and businesses in close proximity to PHAI activities; and Citizen Liaison Group meetings that provide regular forums for PHAI staff and volunteer members to exchange information and receive feedback about the projects. The authors will also touch on public attitude survey mechanisms used to measure the effectiveness of the public information program.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of the PHAI

The PHAI represents the Government of Canada's commitment to respond to the community-recommended solutions for the cleanup and local, safe, long-term management of historic low-level radioactive waste in the municipalities of Port Hope and Clarington in southern Ontario. The waste is the result of the refining practices of the former Crown Corporation, Eldorado Nuclear Ltd., and its private sector predecessors.

A legal agreement [1], finalized in March 2001, between the Government of Canada and the municipalities of Port Hope and Clarington, launched the PHAI by defining the framework and setting out the responsibilities for the Port Hope Project and the Port Granby Project. The PHAI Management Office (PHAI MO), led by Canadian Nuclear Laboratories, is implementing these projects on behalf of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, a federal Crown corporation.

The Port Hope Project involves the cleanup of approximately 1.2 million cubic metres of historic low-level radioactive waste from various sites in Port Hope, the construction of an engineered aboveground mound where the waste will be safely contained, and the long-term maintenance and monitoring of the facility.

The Port Granby Project involves the cleanup of approximately 450,000 cubic metres of historic low-level radioactive waste, located at an existing waste management facility on the shoreline of Lake Ontario in the Municipality of Clarington, the construction of an engineered aboveground mound approximately 700 metres north of the lake where the waste will be safely contained, and the long-term maintenance and monitoring of the facility.

The PHAI Management Office also administers the Property Value Protection (PVP) Program, a federal grant program that is an integral part of the Legal Agreement. The PVP Program offers compensation to property owners within a designated area if they experience a loss on sale, mortgage renewal difficulties, or loss on rental income as a result of the activities of the PHAI.

The PHAI is being undertaken in three phases: Phase 1 – environmental assessments, detailed designs and regulatory approvals; Phase 2 – construction, remediation and restoration and Phase 3 – long-term maintenance and monitoring. Both projects are currently in Phase 2. Construction of new waste water treatment plants for each project is complete, and work on supporting infrastructure is well underway. Remediation of contaminated waste is scheduled to begin in fall 2016 in Port Granby and in 2018 in Port Hope.

1.2 Phase 1 - communications and stakeholder engagement

During Phase 1, the PHAI Management Office provided varied opportunities for two-way engagement through community meetings, open houses, information sessions, workshops,

kitchen table discussions and the centrepiece of the PHAI communications program – the Project Information Exchange. This information office, which continues to operate today, doubles as a library to offer all of the documents on which project direction and decisions are based, such as the environmental assessment study reports, the technical designs and the public registry of stakeholder comments. The PHAI also considered the information needs of a broader public, and audience that included informed stakeholder and environmental groups across Canada. Additionally, mechanisms were established to consult with federal, provincial and municipal government representatives and for Aboriginal peoples.

2. Phase 2 - public information program

2.1 Overview

The PHAI Phase 2 Public Information Program supports the PHAI's overall mission to lead the cleanup of historic low-level radioactive waste in Port Hope and Port Granby in an environmentally responsible and cost-effective manner. Providing accurate, timely and consistent information can contribute to the success of the Port Hope Project and the Port Granby Project by maintaining and increasing stakeholder confidence in the PHAI's ability to safely complete the work while minimizing disruption to the community. The program supports the Port Hope Project Waste Nuclear Substance Licence [2] and Port Granby Project Waste Nuclear Substance Licence [3] issued to Canadian Nuclear Laboratories (CNL) by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) and meets PHAI commitments for public communication under the Legal Agreement and the Environmental Assessment Follow-up Program [4,5] for each of the projects.

2.2 Objectives

The PHAI's comprehensive public information program supports the project delivery teams by providing accurate, timely and consistent information to the public to increase stakeholder confidence in the PHAI's ability to safely remediate and manage the waste for the long term, while minimizing disruptions to the communities. The objectives of the PHAI Public Information Program are to:

1. Provide the public and other stakeholders with effective access to timely information in order to prepare them for upcoming work and help them understand project activities, programs, timing, environmental protection and mitigation measures, long-term benefits and economic opportunities.
2. Build and maintain active support for and confidence in the PHAI with the public and all levels of political leadership in the host communities by ensuring that stakeholders are fully briefed on the background, goals and current developments of the projects.

3. Position the PHAI Management Office as the primary source for accurate project information to reduce the potential for externally generated project delays that may result from misinformation and misconceptions.
4. Provide open and transparent public disclosure about unplanned project activities and events, proportionate with the public's perception of risk and the level of public interest in the PHAI's activities.

2.3 Subject matter

The following broad topics form the basis for the majority of communication products and are the subject of most stakeholder interactions:

- Health and safety of the public and workers
 - Health studies of host communities
 - Radiation levels, risk and protection
- Protection of the environment
 - Baseline and ongoing environmental monitoring
 - Groundwater and surface water
 - Dust management and air quality
- Project plans and progress
 - Major clean-up sites
 - Small-scale sites
 - Property Radiological Survey
 - Remediation and restoration of private properties
 - Timelines and schedules
 - Waste transportation
 - Waste management
 - End use
- PHAI programs
 - Property Value Protection Program
- Contractor oversight
- Regulatory compliance
- Economic benefits of the PHAI
 - Doing business with the PHAI
- History of the historic low-level radioactive waste

2.4 Target audiences

The primary target audiences for the PHAI Public Information Program are shown in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1
PHAI Communications and Stakeholder Relations Target Audiences

Categories		Target Audiences
Public		
Affected property owners and neighbouring residents		• Owners/tenants of properties to be surveyed/remediated • Residents and businesses near LTWMFs, small-scale sites and major sites, and along designated transportation routes
Host community populations		• In particular, households and businesses within Port Hope and the southeastern portion of Ward 4, Clarington, in the vicinity of Port Granby
Business and community groups		• Chambers of commerce • Boards of trade • Offices of economic development • Downtown business associations • Real estate associations • Local service clubs
First Nation and Aboriginal groups		• Alderville First Nation • Hiawatha First Nation • Curve Lake First Nation • Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation
Project-related citizen groups		• Port Hope Project Citizen Liaison Group • Port Granby Project Citizen Liaison Group • Port Granby Discussion Group
Canadian population		• Members of the public across Canada
Government		
Municipal governments		• Municipality of Port Hope • Municipality of Clarington
Regional governments and related agencies		• Northumberland County • Region of Durham • Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority • Durham Nuclear Health Committee • Emergency First Responders
Regulatory authority		• Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission

Categories	Target Audiences
Federal departments	• Health Canada • Environment Canada • Fisheries and Oceans Canada • Transport Canada
Member of Parliament	• MP, Northumberland – Peterborough South
Provincial ministries	• Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change • Ministry of Labour • Ministry of Transportation • Ministry of Natural Resources
Members of Provincial Parliament	• MPP, Northumberland – Quinte West • MPP, Durham
Education	
Local elementary, senior public and high school community	• Staff and student/family populations • Local school councils • Local school boards • Local school transportation companies
Post-secondary institutions with PHAI-related interests	• University of Ontario Institute of Technology • Fleming College • Trent University • Ryerson University
Public Interest Groups	
Non-governmental organizations and interest groups	• Health interest groups • Environmental interest groups • Ratepayers associations

2.5 Tactics

The primary proactive and responsive tactics used in the PHAI Public Information Program for public, municipal and media stakeholders are described in the following sections; in practice, individual tactics may be used to communicate to and engage with stakeholders in multiple categories.

2.5.1 Public stakeholders

- *Project Information Exchange*

The Project Information Exchange (PIE), located at the PHAI MO, is open to the public. A large selection of printed material provides information on the planning, design, implementation, environmental assessment, monitoring and mitigation of the projects and

on the Property Value Protection Program. Three-dimensional models of the Port Hope and Port Granby LTWMFs are also on display in the PIE.

Dedicated staff members are available to provide information on the projects and the PVP Program and respond to questions. The PHAI MO responds to inquiries and requests for information electronically through email.

- *Newsletters/Bulletins*

Port Hope Project and Port Granby Project newsletters and bulletins update residents on the status of the projects, alert them to upcoming work and notify them about changes to planned work or programs. Newsletters are distributed to every household in the Municipality of Port Hope, the southeastern part of the Municipality of Clarington and to an extensive list of federal, provincial, regional and municipal stakeholders. Bulletins are typically distributed to a smaller, targeted audience.

- *PHAI Website*

The bilingual PHAI website – www.phai.ca – provides information on the Port Hope and Port Granby projects including descriptions of current and upcoming work, environmental monitoring reports and the PVP Program. When work is underway, updates on construction activities and environmental monitoring results are posted. The website also provides points of contact including info@phai.ca and pvpinfo@phai.ca.

- *Social Media*

The PHAI social media accounts – Facebook and Twitter – are used primarily to drive users to the PHAI website for more complete information about current construction progress or events. The PHAI MO strives to respond to questions or comments posted by members of the public on PHAI social media accounts as expeditiously as possible, to reflect the rapid response of internet communications. Dialogue of relevance to the PHAI on other social media accounts will be monitored and consideration given to posting timely corrections to inaccurate information about the PHAI.

- *Media Releases*

Media releases are issued to inform the community and brief the media about imminent project activities, project milestones, and changes to PHAI programs or the schedule or nature of the work.

- *Citizen Liaison Groups*

A Citizen Liaison Group (CLG) for each project supplements other communications avenues for the exchange of information and perspectives that can assist the PHAI MO when planning activities that affect the communities. Each CLG brings together a broad cross-section of residents and organizations in key sectors such as business, health, the

environment/ conservation and community life. The CLG is not a decision-making body, and members volunteer to serve for two-year terms.

- *Resident Notifications*

Residents living in close proximity to PHAI-related activity are notified in advance of planned work and of notable changes to the schedule or nature of the work. Notification can occur through website postings, phone calls, emails or door-to-door visits / information drop-offs, depending on the timeframe and the capacity of the residents to receive the notification.

- *Information Sessions*

Information sessions are held as required to inform the community about upcoming PHAI work, provide updates on planned or changed project activity and programs, and receive feedback from the public. As the remediation progresses, information sessions will be held for targeted, smaller groups to convey information and discuss concerns specific to the neighbourhood in proximity to the PHAI work.

- *Presentations*

Presentations are provided on current and planned project activities, and the PVP Program, to varied stakeholders including elected officials and staff at all levels of government, community groups, service clubs, First Nation and Aboriginal groups, educational and scientific/technical sectors and the business community.

- *Site Tours*

Guided tours of PHAI remediation sites and construction areas, led by expert PHAI MO staff, provide a first-hand look at PHAI work, promoting a heightened understanding and appreciation for the complexity and importance of the projects. Tours illustrate the scope of project planning and implementation including environmental protection, compliance with occupational health and safety requirements, and conformance with EA monitoring obligations and adaptive management practices.

Tours are provided in response to requests from residents, all levels of government, community, business and academic groups, technical agencies and international delegations.

- *Liaison with First Nation and Aboriginal Groups*

The PHAI MO provides project information and updates on a regular basis to interested First Nation and Aboriginal groups. Special engagement opportunities in areas such as environmental protection, economic development and heritage resource protection will also be offered as opportunities arise throughout Phase 2.

2.5.2 Municipal Stakeholders

- *Municipal Communications Working Groups*

The Port Hope Communications Working Group and Port Granby Project Communications/Environmental Assessment Working Group provide a forum to address the common communications interests of the municipalities and the PHAI MO.

- *Business Communications Working Group*

Through the Business Communications Working Group, the PHAI MO engages in ongoing dialogue with the Municipality of Port Hope economic development and tourism officials, Clarington Board of Trade, members of the Port Hope and District Chamber of Commerce and members of the Heritage Business Improvement Association to inform the business community of PHAI-related economic opportunities and to help address and mitigate potential project impacts.

2.5.3 Media Stakeholders

- *Media Relations*

The PHAI MO builds and maintains relationships with local and regional media to reinforce the office as the primary source of accurate and timely project information, which can contribute to accurate and balanced media coverage. Local, provincial, national and international media coverage of issues related to the PHAI is monitored and analyzed, allowing the PHAI MO to understand trends, respond to media coverage when necessary and identify effective ways to work with the media to support the PHAI and its projects.

3.0 Monitoring public opinion and media coverage

The PHAI MO monitors and analyzes public opinion, including social media, and media coverage to:

- Record public understanding, perceptions, concerns and opinions about the PHAI and project-related impacts
- Gauge stakeholder support for and awareness of the PHAI
- Be aware of trends in public opinion, social media and/or media coverage and how they may affect public perception of the PHAI
- Respond promptly and effectively to media coverage and social media posts when necessary

Among the methods used to monitor and analyze community and public views, opinions and concerns related to the PHAI projects, programs and supporting activities are:

- *Public attitude surveys*

Through public attitude surveys, the PHAI MO regularly monitors and records public understanding and perceptions of the projects and public opinion about community impacts. Feedback from surveys helps the PHAI MO to gauge stakeholder understanding and awareness of the projects and identify stakeholders' knowledge gaps and preferred means of receiving updates and other project-related information.

- *Media and social media monitoring and analysis*
PHAI MO media analysis is used to monitor the amount and nature of media coverage related to the project generally or to any specific project activity, the type of media involved (e.g. television, print, social media) and the support or concern that has been expressed with relation to the project or activity. Local, provincial, national, international and social media coverage of issues related to the PHAI is monitored and analyzed, enabling the PHAI MO to understand trends, respond to media coverage when necessary and identify effective ways to work with the media.
- *Comment/satisfaction forms*
Public opinions expressed during PHAI stakeholder engagement, such as public visits to the Project Information Exchange, PHAI information sessions and PHAI MO staff presence at external events, are recorded and tracked. PVP Program claimants are invited to provide feedback on a claimant satisfaction form.

4.0 Conclusion

Through its comprehensive public information program, the PHAI support one of Canada's largest environmental remediation and restoration projects by providing timely and consistent information to maintain and increase stakeholder confidence in the PHAI's ability to safely complete the work while minimizing disruption to the communities involved. As the PHAI's Port Hope and Port Granby projects ramp up, strategies for informing and engaging stakeholders will move from broader, community-wide tactics to neighbourhood meetings and one-on-one interactions.

5.0 References

- [1] Legal Agreement, *An Agreement for the Cleanup and Long-Term Safe Management of Low-Level Radioactive Waste Situate in The Town of Port Hope, The Township of Hope and the Municipality of Clarington*, 2001, TRAK #4500-513700-110-000-0002.
- [2] Port Hope Project, *Waste Nuclear Substance Licence*, WNSL-W1-2310.00/2014, Expiry Date: 2014 December 31.
- [3] Port Granby Project, *Waste Nuclear Substance Licence*, WNSL-W1-2311.00/2021, Expiry Date: 2021 December 31.
- [4] AECL PHAI Management Office, *Environmental Assessment Follow-up Program Biophysical Effects Monitoring Plan, Port Hope Project, Revision 1*. March 8, 2011

- [5] AECL PHAI Management Office, Environmental Assessment Follow-up Program
Biophysical Effects Monitoring Plan, Port Granby Project, Revision 0 March 31, 2011