

## **Mayor files FOI request to get Crombie report**

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By Jillian Follert

OSHAWA -- Typically, it's reporters and members of the public who file Freedom of Information (FOI) requests as a way of prying information out of government agencies.

Now Mayor John Gray is trying his hand at it.

On Monday, the mayor filed an FOI with Transport Canada in the hope of extracting a copy of the Crombie Report from Transport Minister Lawrence Cannon.

"We've been led down the garden path for so long now, we need a way to shake things up," the mayor said, noting that this is the first FOI he has ever filed. "It's unorthodox for a mayor to file one, but we had to find an alternative method to deal with this and it's one of the tools in our arsenal." The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act ensures the public can access information controlled by institutions -- like municipalities and higher level governments -- while at the same time shielding information that must legally be kept private.

The act says any exemptions should be limited and specific and that decisions on what will be disclosed should be reviewed independently of the institution that controls the information.

An FOI request is filed by writing a formal letter requesting the information needed and the reasons it should be provided. It typically takes 30 days for a decision to be rendered.

"I'm surprised the mayor decided to go this way," said Oshawa MP Colin Carrie, who has been reassuring residents for months that the report is forthcoming. "I've seen him several times recently and he hasn't said anything to me about the Crombie report."

Mr. Carrie said he hasn't seen the report but he is guessing that it includes legal and environmental recommendations that would need to go outside Transport Canada for review.

"The report is not delayed, Transport Canada is just doing its due diligence," he said. "I'm frustrated like everyone else waiting for this."

In 2007, former Toronto mayor David Crombie was appointed by the federal government to mediate a bitter, decades-long dispute over what should be done with Oshawa's waterfront lands.

There are many competing groups pushing for their vision to prevail and Mr. Crombie spent months interviewing politicians, harbour users, local industry and other stakeholders before writing his recommendations in February and submitting them to the transport minister.

There is no indication what type of vision Mr. Crombie supports and no firm timeline for the report to be released. However, time is running out, Mayor Gray said.

FarmTech Energy has filed a re-zoning application with the City in the hopes of building an ethanol plant at the waterfront and council is expected to make a decision on the matter in September.

Mayor Gray is concerned that if the plant goes ahead and changes the face of the harbour area, whatever Mr. Crombie has recommended may become irrelevant.