

Mayor deserves credit for pushing for Crombie Report

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You have to give Oshawa Mayor John Gray points for creativity and determination.

Mayor Gray, frustrated with the months-long wait for the Crombie Report on the Oshawa waterfront, has filed a Freedom of Information (FOI) request with Transport Canada in the hope of finally getting the 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 as he noted he'd never filed an FOI before. "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."

Typically, it's reporters and, less frequently, members of the public who file FOI requests as a way of prying information out of government agencies. It's rare to see one government official use an FOI to glean information from another government body.

The Crombie Report, which was completed months ago, is given that name because it was written by former Toronto mayor David Crombie. He was appointed by the federal government to mediate a bitter, decades-long dispute over what should be done with Oshawa's waterfront lands.

Despite the excessive delay, Oshawa MP Colin Carrie says there's nothing unusual with the amount of time it's taking to make the report public.

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

Due diligence or no, the mayor's FOI approach should at minimum serve to send a message to the feds that the wait is unacceptable. Oshawa City council is expected to make a decision in September on whether an ethanol plant can be set up on Oshawa's waterfront. If the plant goes ahead and changes the face of the harbour area, whatever Mr. Crombie recommends in his report may become moot.

Kudos to the mayor for taking the initiative and forcing the issue. Now the federal government needs to get the message and get moving.