

## Highlighting the Crombie Report: Implementation or Waste Bin (Copyright 2008 by Brian W. Brasier)

### A Very Brief History

Over the past several years the use of lands along the Oshawa waterfront has been a source of disagreement between some of the harbour area's major stakeholders.

In September 2007, the Honourable David Crombie began the task of finding a resolution to those long standing disagreements. During this process, he met with an extensive spectrum of stakeholders, major and otherwise, to receive their input.

On February 21, 2008, Mr. Crombie submitted his report "Recommendations for the Future of Oshawa Harbour" to the Hon. Lawrence Cannon, the federal Minister of Transportation, Infrastructure and Communities.

After a long delay, the report was finally released to the public at the beginning of September, 2008. (Go to <http://www.tc.gc.ca/programs/ports/crombie.htm> to view the report in its entirety.)

### Defining Mixed-Use

In his report, Mr. Crombie issued a number of recommendations that provided for a "mixed-use" of the Oshawa waterfront. Mr. Cannon along with the Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance) and Dr Colin Carrie (MP for Oshawa) have all expressed their support of the report and its call for a mixed-use scenario.

However "mixed-use" is one of those terms that can mean anything or nothing until provided with guidelines that endow it with definition. Fortunately, Mr. Crombie has laid down a clear set of guidelines to govern the mixed-use to which he refers in his report. A number of those, if implemented, will have a significant effect on the future of Second Marsh.

Here are the highlights of those guidelines that most directly affect the marsh (sections contained within double quotation marks [e.g. "marsh"] are direct quotes from the report):

#### Highlight 1. "SECOND MARSH

Second Marsh is recognized universally as an environmental gem in an industrial, transportation and residential setting. It is the largest wetland to be found on the northern shore of Lake Ontario. Its protection and stewardship is supported by all stakeholders and spearheaded by its own active and volunteer governing body.

This report therefore serves to re-enforce the necessity of ensuring not only that the marsh be rendered safe from adverse effects of proposed developments but indeed plans for its future should be considered an integral part of the City's vision for its revitalized waterfront." (page 7)

**Highlight 2. "GIFFORD FARM LANDS"** *(editor's note: This is the proposed site of FarmTech Energy Corporation's ethanol production facility. This recommendation clearly illustrates the gross incompatibility of this facility with the intent for 'mixed-use' laid out in Mr. Crombie's report.)*

"The so-called Gifford Farm Lands provide a valuable physical barrier separating and, in effect, containing the industrial activities of the Port of Oshawa to the west from the environmentally sensitive marshlands to the east, known as Second Marsh.

The City should be mindful of the importance of that buffer-zone role in preserving a balanced waterfront, when considering the possible benefit of future development of these lands.

Accordingly, as previously noted, any surplus from the sale or development of this large and significant tract of land would be re-invested in the waterfront.” (page 7)

**Highlight 3.** “This report recommends that ownership of the port and surrounding lands be vested in the City of Oshawa under specific conditions and obligations. These are described in detail in the recommendations for each area.” (page 4)  
*(editor’s note: This recommendation is a noteworthy development in that significant influence over the use of the port lands would be taken from the Oshawa Harbour Commission and invested in the City of Oshawa. The city has an established track record of taking a long-term, people-friendly view of the waterfront.)*

**Highlight 4.** “It is further recommended that an independent, five-person board be established and maintained by the City to oversee management of the port. This management board would be accountable to the City and its membership drawn from the following local institutions:

- A representative of Oshawa City Council
- A representative of the Port Industrial Users Group
- A representative of the Friends of Second Marsh
- A representative of the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce
- An outside Chair chosen by the other four members of the Board” (pages 5 & 6)

*(editor’s note: This recommendation effectively puts the major decision making process back into the hands of the waterfront stakeholders, including the people of Oshawa.)*

### **Implementation or Waste Bin**

On the last page of his report, Mr. Crombie notes that the ethanol plant is an important development issue that should be among the first orders of business for the new oversight body (see highlight 4 above) and the City.

As Mr. Crombie also noted, the case of the ethanol plant is subject to other processes (e.g. approval applications to various government agencies), some of which are already in their initial phases. These are processes in which the decisions of the Oshawa waterfront oversight body would likely exert considerable influence. However, those oversight decisions cannot be made until this body exists.

Therefore, as far as the ethanol plant is concerned, the ability of the people of Oshawa to influence the use of their waterfront through the oversight body depends on the quick implementation of Mr. Crombie’s recommendations.

In turn, that quick implementation depends on the commitment of our federal representatives to Mr. Crombie’s report. It is no good to claim that one endorses the report but then delay the enactment of its guidelines until those guidelines are no longer able to influence the matters they were intended to govern.

While some guidelines may require extensive additional planning, others could be implemented relatively quickly. These others include:

- the establishment of the Gifford Farm Lands as a buffer zone protecting Second Marsh and,
- the formation of an oversight body, This second guideline would be a significant step towards guaranteeing the enactment of the first.

Unless our federal representatives are committed to moving swiftly, there is a very real possibility that FarmTech’s ethanol plant could be imposed onto the Gifford Farm Lands. This would effectively consign David Crombie’s guidelines to the waste bin and the “mixed-use” that results will be a glaring and shameful distortion of that intended by Mr. Crombie and the people of Oshawa.