



Loreena McKennitt - Rally #4 Remarks  
December 14, 2020  
Market Square, Stratford, Ontario

Thank you all again for coming out on this wintery day, in a pandemic and so close to Christmas. You're real troopers.

I also want to acknowledge some of our youth who have joined us today, either here in the square or on the march, which is happening now around the perimeters of this square. It is your future we're trying to protect, as well as ours.

I also wish to thank the folks at *Get Concerned Stratford* for the great work they continue to do. I know they too have some important updates to share.

I would also like to invite anyone here who has yet to join our *Wise Communities* mailing list to please do so. Once again, we are in charge of this rally here today.

One last bit of housekeeping before we get launched. I know a number of you have reached out and contacted the Mayor and City Councillors. Your passion and commitment to this cause are admirable. But I want to remind everyone to please do so respectfully and refrain from visiting them at their residences. We all live in this beautiful city, but we also all need to know we have the safety and security of our homes.

Finally, I'm sure that everyone is now aware that the Special City Council meeting scheduled for tonight has been cancelled and that Wednesday's meeting to consider the cost-sharing agreement with Xinyi has been postponed.

So, let's get started. I want to begin with an update from Mike Sullivan from *Get Concerned Stratford*.

[Mike speaks]

Today, I'd also like to offer a bit of a summary leading to where we are now. In order to do so, I've divided up the weeks since the plant was first announced. Week 1 was when investStratford announced the Xinyi project on Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>. So, by my count we're now at the beginning of Week 8.

Over the past 8 weeks and against all odds, this community of concerned citizens rose up to meet an urgent challenge. Why was this plant being planned for Stratford? Who was behind it? And why weren't we, as citizens, allowed to participate in a robust and fulsome debate, which is our legal and democratic right?

In review, we see that either through presentations here at the rallies, or through information sessions like the one *Get Concerned Stratford* facilitated last Tuesday Dec. 8<sup>th</sup>, we've learned more about emissions and water consumption, issues surrounding a possible dormitory and more.

We have read a letter from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture which has unequivocally stated they are not only concerned, but alarmed at the loss of good arable land and the consequences for the greater picture of food security.

We have heard from business leaders, such as former city councillor Rheo Thompson, who in a letter to me stated his objection to how the property was re-zoned:

*"I had heard about the glass plant coming to Perth South and I asked for at least 9 months people who live in the area what they knew about it and their response was 'nothing'. Then, I read in the paper that it was re-zoned. That is not how democracy works. Also, with the concern about the loss of valuable farm land, why were there not any concerns mentioned?"*

*"As for industry, is farming not an industry? I believe it to be one of the biggest in our area."*

We have also heard from former city solicitor Paul Parlee about national security risks and the human rights violations:

*"The Chinese Government is engaged in a large scale systemic oppression (if not genocide) of millions of people, in particular the Uyghurs, Tibetans and ethnic Muslim populations."*

We have heard from literally hundreds of citizens, offering valid and valuable observations and concerns. All of these deserve to be heard in a thorough and respectful forum and to have a response through an independent, third-party set of experts. Instead, we seem to be subjected to continual 'information sessions', which verge on propaganda from the Xinyi side. And yet, the City of Stratford seems only too happy to go along with this and in fact have 'housed' this sales material on the city website since Week 1.

The citizens of Stratford deserve much more. Much, much, more.

None of us should have to scrape for *scraps* of information or *scraps* of attention against a racing clock. There has been no even-handedness with respect to the time council has allotted to the Xinyi company and their representatives from GSP, the consulting firm hired to promote this project in this area. They have had hours. We have barely had minutes.

In the name of democracy this must STOP.

### **MZO:**

As many of you are now well aware, one of the severe mechanisms which got us here, is a Ministerial Zoning Order, or MZO. This rarely-used instrument (until 2019) is unique. It does not require public consultation, nor can it be appealed, except at the pleasure of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

In order to understand how we got here, I and my team have taken it upon ourselves to study the whole provincial inventory of these MZOs and set them out in a spread sheet. There is definitely a narrative there, as well as emerging patterns.

In a way, it begins in April of this year, just after the pandemic struck. It is also when the current provincial government amended the Planning Act to give the Minister regulation-making authority to address planning timelines in an emergency. This authority was used to file a regulation on April 15, 2020 to address the impact of certain orders under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act on planning timelines and effectively suspend some of these timelines.

You might think it all makes sense since the pandemic is an emergency. But upon closer examination, there seem to be numerous MZOs which have no connection whatsoever to the pandemic. Four of them were rolled out on April 24<sup>th</sup> alone. The first was for the City of Vaughan to facilitate a \$500-million, 2,000-job warehouse and distribution centre for Wal-Mart. Why did this need an MZO when normally it would have gone through the front door of the Planning Act? Does this sound COVID related to you?

Or take the situation in Aurora where the mayor wasn't even aware of the use of an MZO. I quote the Toronto Star's coverage of this event on Dec. 8<sup>th</sup>:

*“First came the decision, and then came the phone call. Earlier this fall, Aurora Mayor Mrakas said town planning staff were stunned when they received a call from the province, informing them the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing had issued a Minister’s Zoning Order on a 10-acre local parcel of provincially-owned land.*

*The surprise order that day for land, that sits on the environmentally sensitive Oak Ridges Moraine, called for the development of a 128-bed, long-term care facility, but also the maximum number of 30 ft detached housing that could fit on four acres.*

*The decision, Mrakas said, was made without consulting them at all. How does someone make a decision on community growth in the area without even understanding the community itself, without visiting it? This is not how you grow communities. This is how you ruin them.”*

So, we know that in each case, there were more than just the local municipal councils involved. Or as Lady Diana once famously said, “well, there were three of us.”

Two weeks ago, I referred to a Toronto Star article with the headline *Developers 1 - The Environment 0*.

And last week’s news, which I brought to your attention, was the resignation of a number of members from the Greenbelt Council, including David Crombie, a former Toronto mayor and former federal Conservative cabinet minister.

Before I invite Mr. Crombie to say a few words, I would like to refresh our memories about what Conservative leader Doug Ford said to his developer friends in a gathering in April 2018, leading up to the June election. It’s captured in an audio clip of a video which is posted on our *Wise Communities* website.

Well, I think I’ll just leave it for Mr. Ford to speak for himself.

[AUDIO-VIDEO CLIP] <https://pressprogress.ca/doug-ford-made-a-secret-backroom-deal-to-sell-big-chunk-of-torontos-greenbelt-to-developers/>

This means that Mr. Ford, now premier, clearly had his eye on the Greenbelt even before the election.

And with that, I would like to take this opportunity to invite Mr. David Crombie to share a few remarks with us live from his home in Toronto today. Mr. Crombie?

[Mr. Crombie speaks]

Thank you so much for those remarks. We are most grateful for your knowledge, experience and expertise and we look forward to seeing you in the future.

So you see, we're not alone. There is more to tell and more questions to ask and they aren't just here with our own mayor and council.

### **First Nations:**

Last week we mentioned there is a Duty to Consult First Nations, as referenced in Section 35 of the Constitution Act. This is not just a pleasantry. It is a legal obligation.

We also learned there are five First Nations communities living downstream from where this proposed factory is to be located. Yet it appears these communities were *not* included in any consultation process.

In conversation with Leslee White-Eye, former Chief of the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, she relayed that her community was particularly concerned with any aspect involving water and the watershed. And we know there are significant water issues with this plant.

### **Security:**

Over the past few weeks, I have also relayed remarks made by former city solicitor Mr. Paul Parlee, regarding Canadian security and the state of China-Canadian relations. Those relations have severely declined, even since the federal government certified Xinyi for this initiative in May. We know we've also just passed the two-year mark in the detention of the two Michaels in China – Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor.

We remind ourselves that we must not conflate the population of China with the government of China and the Chinese Communist Party and slide into a racist avenue. But at the same time, we must be able to freely and openly stand up when we feel our communities and our country are at risk.

Which brings us to today. Just this morning a letter was sent off from myself and a Mr. Patrick O'Rourke, a retired solicitor who worked with the B.C. government and now lives here in Stratford. Our letter was sent to Mr. Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry. It sets out our deepest concerns regarding the potential security risk this float glass plant represents, not only to this community but to the country.

The letter is posted on the *Wise Communities* website. In it, we are begging Minister Bains to please review this matter before it is too late. I quote:

*“Since the proposal was first publicly announced in late October, residents have conducted considerable research and scrutiny. In our opinion this research discloses reasonable, indeed compelling, grounds to believe the proposed investment by Xinyi could be injurious to national security. Accordingly, we request that you issue a notice to the company under s.25.2 (1) of the Investment Canada Act.*

*Although Xinyi claims to be a “private company”, information obtained from public sources discloses close ties between the company and the Government of China and the Chinese Communist Party, and an intricate web of offshore ownership of Xinyi (see attached A). Further, as you know, Chinese law requires all Chinese organizations and companies to provide access, cooperation and support for Chinese intelligence gathering activities. Consistent with your April 18, 2020 policy statement, these close ties to the Chinese Government means this investment should be subject to the same enhanced scrutiny, as if it was a state-owned enterprise.*

*According to Investment Canada Guidelines, the proposed business activity, along with the parties involved and the potential for third party influence, **must be considered**. As noted above, Xinyi is owned by a network of entities registered in tax havens, and has close ties to third parties.*

The letter goes on to say:

*“Stratford is a wireless city, and a centre for research and development related to autonomous vehicles. The open network could be used for surveillance of Chinese nationals, or other persons living in Stratford. Protection of Canadian-based research on autonomous vehicles from unauthorized persons is clearly a national security matter.*

And finally, we suggest:

*“The United States recently expelled a large number of scientists who were seen as a national security risk due to their links with the Chinese Government and the Communist Party of China. Further investigation of Xinyi’s proposal is warranted on this ground alone.”*

### **Wrap up:**

We are still in unpredictable waters here. Anything could happen at any time. We all need to continue to lean against this wheel, as hard and as long as is necessary until the job is done.

This is no time to let up. We must continue to build public awareness and education in every way possible until this matter is resolved. Clearly, this issue goes beyond just Stratford’s interests. It involves the interests of our entire nation and we will stand on guard for thee.

You folks have been great. This has been an unbelievable community effort and continues to be so. I feel so proud to be a part of it. We could not have come this far without **each one of us** playing the roles we have.

It's hard to say where we'll be in another week. We may be right back here on Monday, although we hope that won't be necessary. In the meantime, please stay connected through both *Get Concerned Stratford* and the *Wise Communities* website and be sure to sign up to both mailing lists. We will do what we can to keep you as up-to-date as possible.

May I close by repeating what I've said at every one of these rallies.

***Canadians stand for democracy, human rights and the rule of law.***

***Defending it begins at home.***

***Thank you.***