



Loreena McKennitt - Rally #6 Remarks
January 11, 2021
Market Square, Stratford, Ontario

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Loreena McKennitt and I'm speaking as the founder of [Wise Communities](#), the organizer of this rally.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To begin, I would like to express our First Nations Land Acknowledgement.

It is a great privilege to share this beautiful territory, which has been the site of human activity for many thousands of years.

This territory is governed by two treaties. The first is the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant of 1701, made between the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. It is an agreement to set violence aside and peacefully share and care for the land in the Great Lakes Basin.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/a-dish-with-one-spoon>

The second is the Huron Tract Treaty of 1827, an agreement between 18 Anishinaabek Chiefs and the Canada Company, an agency of the British Crown. As individuals, we are in a process of learning how we can be better treaty partners.

We wish to honour the ancestral guardians of this land and its waterways: the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat, and the Neutrals. Today, many Indigenous peoples continue to call this land home and act as its

stewards. And this responsibility extends to all peoples, to share and care for this land for generations to come.

Today, most of you will be watching from home since COVID regulations are more restrictive than they were when we last met here on December 21.

For this rally, we have only planned for 10 people to be in the square. Most of them are crew and it's likely, with a further lockdown looming, we'll not be able to meet here at all until this matter is resolved or the lockdown is lifted.

This is as it should be since public safety must take priority. Yet, we will continue to review our options as to how we'll stay connected in the coming days.

In a rally before the holiday break, we heard from one of our local youth, Quintan Whittaker. Today, we'll have the voice of another youth, Effie Honeywell.

I've also invited Ann Carbert from [Climate Momentum](#) to say a few words and we'll have a brief update from [Get Concerned Stratford](#).

I will conclude today's rally with my own thoughts which will be in the form of a presentation directly delivered to the Mayor and councillors, as they have been invited to observe this rally either live or later at their convenience.

It's hard to say exactly where we're at with this process. It seems like a very long time ago since October 29 when the community was initially and formally alerted to the prospect of this glass factory. And yet we know there may be many miles ahead of us and in the most challenging of circumstances - a global pandemic.

And yet, our success - however it looks - will depend on our stamina and whatever tools and capacities we have available to us.

Today, I see this square full of shoes and boots - *your* shoes and boots. It is a visible testimony to your devotion to this matter and our willingness to stay the course.

At the same time and no matter how long this might continue, I will ask this of you: That all our communications and efforts be respectful to each other and particularly to the mayor and members of council.

We must remind ourselves that under these circumstances we don't know everything, and we may never know everything. There is often more to something than meets the eye.

In the meantime, it is imperative that we hold ourselves to a very high standard of conduct. We must not make things personal, not doorstep the mayor with lawyer's questions in Zoom meetings, not carpet bomb councillors' email bins with template missives to the extent it overwhelms them and they're frozen with despair. Let us be as informed and thoughtful as we can be.

Write councillors your own thoughts, but treat them with the respect you would expect if you were in their shoes. There is nothing wrong with a robust debate, but it must be respectful and civil.

I would also invite you to consider abandoning social media as a venue to discuss this subject. It is seldom now respectful or accountable and it cultivates a polarization of opinion. When taken to the extreme, as we saw in the U.S. last week, it has the capacity to radicalize a large section of the population. It becomes a pulpit for slander and bullying and has no place in thoughtful, yet challenging civic discussion.

Ask the councillors going forward, what means of communication *they* find most helpful and then respect that. But please do not make your comments personal. Speak to the *person* in office.

GET CONCERNED STRATFORD

To get us started I would now ask Mike Sullivan from [Get Concerned Stratford](#) to give us a brief update on their efforts.

[Mike speaks]

Thank you for that Mike.

YOUTH

As so many of you have shared with me, the matter of this glass factory is not just about us and our generation. It's also part of a path of looking forward and the legacy left to the next generation.

Based on this, I believe our youth must continue to have a voice in these rallies and if nothing else, learn along with us about the process of advocating for society and

this community. And so, it is with great pleasure that I now introduce to you, Effie Honeywell.

[Effie speaks]

Thank you Effie. Your words are very important to us and it's important they be heard. Thank you for taking the time.

CLIMATE MOMENTUM

I would now like to invite Ann Carbert from [Climate Momentum](#) to update us on where that organization is at.

We know that [Climate Momentum](#) and the whole Climate Emergency Plan were high priorities before the glass factory matter distracted us from their progress. We also acknowledge there are still serious outstanding environmental concerns *within* the glass factory project itself.

The Climate Emergency Declaration, which this city signed almost a year ago, must now and in the future, be an unbreachable benchmark when considering any future development.

I and many others are eager to learn and stay connected with your *Climate Momentum* work and how it informs future industrial development in this city.

Ann, would you please offer us your remarks today?

[Ann speaks]

Thank you Ann.

LORENN MCKENNITT REMARKS

I would now like to offer my remarks about where I think we are at. I would like to do that by addressing the Mayor and councillors directly, some of whom will be watching now or sometime after this rally.

I am choosing to do it in this way because I think we are entering a phase where decisions of some kind will soon be made. We do not know exactly what the path of

decision making might look like, or exactly when it will take place. So now I will address the Mayor and council.

Good afternoon Mayor Matheson and council.

First of all, let me add my voice of thanks and gratitude for your service to this community. I know this has been a particularly difficult time for you. You've received a great deal of feedback from this community concerning the Xinyi glass factory. And we well know this is not the only matter you are attending to on our citizens' behalf. I am also grateful that we all had a break from this over the holidays.

And yet, I sense the time will be drawing near for you to be making some kind of decision concerning this matter.

I want to assure you that by my speaking to you so directly today, it is not out of disrespect, or because I in any way know more than you. I am just seeking to ensure that you know no less.

I, along with others, have had the opportunity to sit down with the Mayor on a few occasions to try to develop a deeper understanding of this project and why certain decisions have been made – both the way they've been made and the timeframe.

My last meeting with the Mayor was on Friday. I'd like to share with you a bit about it.

I would say it was a very difficult yet positive meeting and it ranged across many themes. It began by discussing the importance of foreign investment and the necessity of diversification of industries, which can build strength and resilience for a community.

We talked about improving the nature of the specifications of industries which might be invited to come to our city and how they might be complementary to those already existing, aligned with the image, priorities and values of local residents.

We talked about how important it was to ensure all voices in the community were being considered and heard, including those who saw things in this proposal that were favourable to them and their needs.

We talked about how important it was to conduct our communications with respect and how communications along various lines could be strengthened.

We talked about the role of the provincial and federal governments in this project and their involvement from the very beginning.

We reviewed a somewhat detailed timeline which I and my colleagues have been assembling. It illustrates how invisibly the project moved along and not meeting citizen's expectations. I highlighted that it was this lack of transparency and democratic process which has caused such alarm, impassioned feelings and a loss of trust with our elected officials. (This timeline will be available on the *Wise Communities* website after this rally.)

We talked about other factors contributing to a loss of trust, including how conflict of interest is dealt with at council.

Not all of this was comfortable for either myself or the mayor and yet we mustered on.

We talked about the need of citizens to become more civically conversant and I echoed that, since my own education was so sorely lacking in that regard, I dearly wished civics was a stronger priority in the education system.

We talked about the two integrity commissioner's reports, which I have seen and which clear the mayor of any misconduct.

Most importantly and significantly, we talked about how to improve the process going forward - a journey that has now begun.

LACK OF INFORMATION

I believe that very shortly you may be asked to make another very important decision. Even though you've already received a great deal of information and feedback from all directions, it remains quite apparent there's still a great deal of information outstanding.

The information that has been received has not been verified, or examined by unbiased third-party analysis. Instead, it appears to be akin to marketing and/or propaganda, whether it's greenhouse gas emissions, jobs, salaries, working conditions, dormitories or anything else.

We're also aware there is still important due diligence to be taken and then reviewed, particularly with respect to *current* China-Canada relations. With this in mind, I'll be sending you an email this morning where you'll find an excerpt from a book called *Insidious Power: How China Undermines Global Democracy* and another excerpt from a book entitled *Reset: Reclaiming the Internet for Civil Society*. Both speak to the attention which needs to be borne in mind when considering a project like this glass plant.

The email will also include a profile of the Xinyi corporate structure. I know you will have received some other communications on this theme, but I just want to ensure you have universal access to this particular material.

Another area which deserves more due diligence concerns the First Nations communities.

Yes, it's true that during the annexation phase of the agricultural land in January of last year an initial Duty to Consult was undertaken with respect to 10 First Nations communities.

However, this was based on the understanding this annexation was simply to gather more property for some undetermined future industrial use and was therefore examined purely on an archeological basis. They, like the neighbours to this land, were left in the dark about the true purpose of that annexation. This is seen most strikingly in our timeline document between December 19, 2019 and February 6, 2020.

Given all we know about the environmental concerns surrounding this proposed factory, including greenhouse emissions and water consumption, it would be dishonourable not to undertake a fresh Duty to Consult with all the First Nations communities possibly affected by the factory, its operations and the implications.

And yet, as long as there continues to be information outstanding, like the rest of us, we can hardly ask them in good faith to draw upon their scarce resources of time and people while they too are struggling to contain this punishing pandemic. It would not be fair to expect them to develop a premature position when so much information is still incomplete and unavailable.

Therefore, our duty is one of *diligence* first, decisions second.

Now and in the future, we are respectfully demanding a process that would embody the highest standards and best practices of transparency and democratic involvement.

This would see the Xinyi company – or any company for that matter – furnish you and the citizens of this community with a complete and final set of documents and information, after which there would be a thorough examination of all aspects, sometimes with third-party experts. It would be presented to elected officials and citizens *before* any proposal would be accepted or denied.

So, at this time I want to impress upon you how *premature* any affirmative vote would be. The only logical, reasonable and responsible step is to dismiss this project.

Should it appear again, it must be put through a stronger and more accountable process which we have begun to put in place and in which we can all believe in. Then and only then can the path toward rebuilding our trust begin.

Although we as citizens may never know the full account of what has lead us to this point, I want to believe and need to believe that we're all working towards the best interests of our community and our neighbours' communities, whether they're other counties or our First Nations people.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone again for their ongoing contributions to protecting the integrity of our community, the environment and our democracy. As the masthead slogan of the *Washington Post* reads, 'Democracy Dies in Darkness'. It is through so much collective effort that our situation here has been brought to light.

As citizens of this community and across this land, we value democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Defending it begins at home.