



Loreena McKennitt - Rally #1 Remarks
November 23, 2020
Market Square, Stratford, Ontario

Thank you very much everyone for coming out, especially on a winter's day and in the midst of a pandemic. I know we wouldn't be here if the stakes weren't so high.

I'd also like to acknowledge all of you involved in [*Get Concerned Stratford*](#), with support from many others, who worked so diligently over the weekend to pull this rally together. Together, you are an incredible team.

I also want so say that although I may be a well-known person professionally, in this community I consider myself just one more citizen with no greater or lesser a voice.

I don't want to speak for too long today, but I do want to share a few thoughts on what matters most to me in this issue.

Because there are so many complex and technical strands to this glass factory project, many of us may gravitate to strands which we relate to more than others. I was so impressed hearing such eloquent citizens last Monday evening as they presented their concerns to council, concerns which include environmental issues and land use, to name but a few.

For me personally, the overarching strand which has disturbed *me* the most, has been the lack of a democratic process – a process which should be rich with transparency and citizen involvement. And if done well it should deliver the community with a result and decision, which even if we don't like, we might at least respect.

In the immediate sense, to me it matters not where this company comes from. It could come from anywhere else in the world, or even Canada for that matter. It boils down to this: Is the proposed factory suitable for Stratford and does it meet the goals and highest standards this community has set for itself, with respect to climate change

and environmental principles, which in turn inform our city's plan? And does this initiative embody the strongest workplace and human rights framework? This is what we want.

In the matter that is before us, there are some serious and important questions to ask:

Why did the City of Stratford believe this enterprise was suitable for this community, when so many others turned it down? And why *did they* turn it down?

Who initiated this project and when, and what was the ultimate goal? To provide jobs, tax money, funding for future infrastructure, or something else?

Maybe there's a perfectly plausible and noble explanation for all of this. We just need to hear it.

As we learn more about such concerning administrative instruments as MZOs (Ministerial Zoning Orders), we need to understand what role it played in advancing this project and whether it was used abusively in order to advance things under the citizens' radar?

In the immediate sense, I believe the citizens of Stratford deserve to see a moratorium on this project until we have a full narrative and accounting of how it got this far so fast with so little citizen input, not to mention where it might go from here.

We don't deserve or want to feel things are going on under a cover of darkness, or obscured during these pandemic times when everyone is busy just trying to survive. We want to feel like our elected officials are working for us.

If we are to have hope in the future, we know that hope needs many things to flourish. It needs courage, it needs action and it needs trust.