

Warsaw–Toronto Friendship Committee  
Chris Korwin-Kuczynski, Chair  
Ted Opitz, Vice Chair  
2285 Lakeshore Blvd West Toronto, ON  
M8V 3X9

25 March, 2026

John D. Elvidge  
City Clerk City of Toronto  
100 Queen Street West Toronto, ON  
M5H 2N2

Re: Opposition to “One Country, One Flag; Celebrating the Canadian Flag” Motion

Dear Mr. Elvidge,

I am writing to express our strong opposition to the “One Country, One Flag” motion scheduled for debate at the March 25–27, 2026 Council meeting. I respectfully request that this letter be circulated to all Members of Toronto City Council for their consideration.

While the motion is framed as an effort to reduce divisiveness, its practical effect would be to limit civic participation, weaken Toronto’s international partnerships, and undermine the multicultural principles that define this city. Toronto’s diasporas, including the Polish community, of which we are members, have contributed significantly to the economic, cultural, and civic development of our city. These communities are not peripheral; they are residents, taxpayers, and active participants in municipal life. Courtesy flag raisings have long been one of the few accessible, low-cost mechanisms through which communities can express their heritage and be recognized at the seat of local government.

The proposed ban on flying foreign national flags would disproportionately impact ethnic communities while exempting sports teams and other non-governmental symbols. This inconsistency raises clear equity concerns and conflicts with the principles embedded in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and the City’s own Equity, Diversity and Inclusion framework. These instruments collectively affirm the right of individuals and communities to express cultural identity without discrimination. Removing long-standing access to courtesy flagpoles for cultural observances would restrict that expression in a way that is neither neutral nor equitable.

Beyond the legal and equity implications, the motion risks undermining Toronto’s formal international relationships. Toronto and Warsaw have maintained a Friendship City agreement since 1990 under the International Alliance Program. This agreement is not symbolic; it provides a structured framework for:

- Economic development and bilateral trade, including business missions and investment opportunities.
- Knowledge exchange, particularly in municipal governance, urban planning, and infrastructure.
- Cultural and academic cooperation, which strengthens people-to-people ties and enhances Toronto’s global profile.

The above is also true for all of Toronto's diasporas. These activities generate true economic and diplomatic value for Toronto. Restricting the ability of communities to mark national days or raise their flags at City Hall violates the spirit and practical operation of these agreements. It also sends an unfortunate signal to international partners that Toronto is retreating from the global engagement it has spent decades cultivating.

This concern is amplified by the broader national context. Canada and Poland maintain a Youth Mobility Program that facilitates work experience and training for young adults in both countries. Additionally, the Canada–EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) has significantly expanded trade between Canada and Poland. Municipal diplomacy and community-level engagement are essential components of these broader economic and cultural relationships. Curtailing them would be counterproductive and contrary to Toronto's long-standing global orientation.

Ontario and Canada as stated above are actively negotiating with the EU and with Poland on energy, defence, and other key initiatives. The subject motion will have a negative impact on these ongoing activities, which many Polish diaspora organizations, such as the Toronto–Warsaw Friendship Committee and business-focused chambers, have worked hard to build and cultivate. Passage of this motion will erode this work, diminish the goodwill built over many years, and reflect reputationally on the City of Toronto. Beyond Europe, this motion would also impact those diasporas who originate from the Trans-Pacific region. South Korea for example, is bidding on Canada's next submarine program. Hanwha Ocean is investing in Ontario and in particular the University of Toronto on research into AI and maritime systems and Arctic-capable vessel technologies, bringing world class knowledge and revenue to Toronto.

We stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian community. Mayor Olivia Chow has been a consistent and visible supporter of Ukraine and Toronto's Ukrainian community, regularly attending rallies, cultural events, and commemorations where the Ukrainian flag is prominently displayed. At these gatherings, including major solidarity events in Nathan Phillips Square, the Mayor stated that Toronto stands with Ukraine and Toronto's Ukrainian diaspora emphasizing the city's role in welcoming those displaced by Putin's illegal war and the many war crimes that continue to be documented which has caused so many to flee. The Ukrainian flag currently flying at City Hall has become an important symbol of that solidarity, and its presence underscores this strong relationship. Removing it would send a harmful and unnecessary message to a diaspora that has contributed enormously to Toronto's civic and cultural life, and it would undermine the work of organizations such as the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Toronto Branch, which has welcomed and supported council members and Mayor Chow at these events. These organizations have played a central role in mobilizing community support for newcomers, humanitarian relief, and public education.

Another example, which is too easily dismissed is the significance of April 2nd, Pope John Paul II Day, which is recognized uniquely in Canada and enshrined in Ontario law. The extraordinary global impact of Pope John Paul II, later canonized as Saint John Paul II, extends far beyond the Catholic Church. His message of human dignity, peace, and solidarity resonated across Toronto's many diasporas, and he reached out to people of every faith and background. This was most evident when the city hosted World Youth Days 2002 hosting almost a million people who travelled to Toronto's Downsview Park to see and hear his words. This includes the over billion people that watched this unfold in Toronto from across the globe. A request to raise a flag in honour of this day is not merely a religious observance; it is a recognition of a figure who inspired billions and shaped global human rights, interfaith dialogue, and the pursuit of freedom. Denying this recognition would be deeply hurtful to Toronto's Catholic population

and to all those who welcomed him into their hearts and whose lives were touched by his example of compassion, courage, and moral leadership.

Finally, we would like to remind Council of a formative moment in Toronto's history, one that brought cultures together and helped define who we are as a city. Caravan, launched in 1967, was one of Toronto's earliest and most influential celebrations of multiculturalism. At a time when the city was rapidly changing through new waves of immigration, Caravan invited Torontonians to step into community-run pavilions across the city and experience the food, music, dance, and traditions of their neighbours. Long before multiculturalism became official Canadian policy, Caravan created a welcoming public space where communities could present their identities proudly and where residents could learn about one another through genuine, personal interaction. For more than three decades, it helped shape Toronto's reputation as a city that doesn't merely tolerate diversity but embraces it openly and with pride. Its legacy reminds us that visible cultural expression, shared respectfully and in the spirit of community, has always strengthened Toronto's social fabric and deepened our sense of belonging. Will Toronto City Council now forget this important history and turn away from the very goals that once inspired us and ultimately became the way we live together today?

The Canadian flag is a unifying symbol, but unity in Canada has never meant uniformity. Toronto's identity is rooted in the idea that people from diverse backgrounds can bring their full selves into public life. Courtesy flag raisings have never been a source of division; they have been a respectful way for communities to share their heritage and for the City to acknowledge its global connections. Eliminating this practice would not reduce conflict, it would reduce representation.

For these reasons, We urge Council to reject the "One Country, One Flag" motion and reaffirm Toronto's commitment to multicultural inclusion, international cooperation, and equitable civic participation. Toronto's reputation as a global, welcoming, and outward-looking city depends on it.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and for ensuring that this submission is distributed to all Members of Council.

Sincerely,

//Signed//

Chris Korwin-Kuczynski, Chair, and  
Ted Opitz, Vice Chair

Delivered by Email to: [clerk@toronto.ca](mailto:clerk@toronto.ca)