



**NICK MANTAS** | CITY COUNCILLOR

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WARD 22, SCARBOROUGH-AGINCOURT

March 27, 2026

Dear fellow Torontonians,

On March 26, Toronto City Council voted to adopt changes to the City's flag-raising policy through a motion moved by Councillor Jon Burnside and seconded by Councillor Michael Thompson.

This decision removes access to civic flag raisings for ethnocultural and many nonprofit and charitable organizations, while maintaining a limited set of exceptions. Many charities that do important work within and across our communities will no longer have the opportunity to be recognized in this way.

I did not support this motion.

I also want to speak to how this decision came forward. A policy of this significance should be shaped through a clear, transparent process, with thoughtful review and meaningful consultation. That did not happen here. There was limited opportunity for full discussion and input before the decision was made.

If the goal of this change is neutrality, then it must be applied consistently. We should either have a clear and fair system that allows for community recognition, or remove that system entirely and apply the same rule equally to everyone. What has been adopted falls somewhere in between. Some forms of expression will continue to be recognized in civic spaces, while others will not. That is not neutrality. It is selectivity.

That selectivity is also reflected in who continues to have access. While many community and cultural groups are excluded, the policy maintains allowances for a small number of pre-selected interests, including professional sports teams, even though they are privately owned, for-profit organizations. This further raises questions about consistency and fairness.

And that selectivity creates a deeper concern. Once that line is drawn, the issue is no longer just about policy. It becomes about people. It raises difficult but important questions about who is included, who is excluded, and on what basis. These are not questions the City should be navigating without a clear, principled, and consistent framework.

It is also important to recognize what has been lost. For many communities, flag raisings were never about politics or foreign governments. They were about recognition. They marked meaningful moments, celebrated heritage, and acknowledged the contributions of communities that help shape our city. It was a simple but meaningful gesture that said you are here, you contribute, and you belong. That gesture is now diminished.

**TORONTO CITY HALL**

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Toronto's strength has always been its ability to bring people together, not by asking anyone to leave their identity behind, but by recognizing it within a shared civic space. That balance mattered, and it was working.

I am also concerned that this new approach introduces unnecessary challenges. When similar forms of expression are treated differently without a clear and consistent rationale, it creates ongoing uncertainty, legally, politically, and socially. It also raises important questions related to consistency, fairness, potential Charter challenges, and how these distinctions will be interpreted over time. More importantly, it risks creating the perception of unequal treatment, and that is where division can begin.

That said, Council has made its decision, and the responsibility now shifts to what comes next. City staff have been directed to review the broader approach to civic recognition, and this will be an important opportunity to get this right.

I will be advocating for clear and consistent principles, meaningful community consultation, and a framework that treats all communities fairly. This conversation is not over, and it should not be. At its core, this is about how we reflect the people who make up our city.

Toronto should be a place where people feel both united and recognized, not one at the expense of the other. A meaningful part of my role is working closely with the many ethnocultural communities that make up our ward and our city. This is work that brings me a great deal of pride and genuine joy. It is in these moments that we learn from one another. We build awareness. We begin to understand different histories, cultures, and experiences. And over time, we find common ground. What once felt unfamiliar becomes something we respect, appreciate, and connect with.

That is what makes Toronto special.

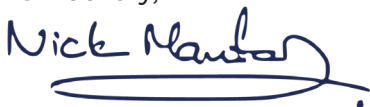
Flag raisings have been part of that experience. They are not simply symbolic. They create opportunities for education, for awareness, and for celebration. Just as importantly, they create space to recognize struggles, histories, and experiences that are not always visible.

Our communities carry stories that deserve to be acknowledged. Stories of hardship, resilience, and contribution. Those stories do not begin and end with a limited list. They extend far beyond it.

That is why this matters.

If you have thoughts or concerns, I encourage you to reach out. I am here to listen, and I will continue to advocate for a city where everyone feels seen, respected, and included.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nick Mantas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke underneath the name.

Nick Mantas  
City Councillor, Ward 22 - Scarborough-Agincourt

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