

Mississauga News

Shark fin products banned

Thu Oct 13 2011
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Section: News
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The City of Mississauga has banned shark fin products in an attempt to curb what it believes to be the needless slaughter of the large fish.

At yesterday's meeting of Council, councillors unanimously endorsed a bylaw regulating the possession, sale, trade and distribution of such products, often used in soup and other forms of Asian cooking and considered a delicacy by some.

A report presented this past summer to the City revealed that an estimated 70-100 million sharks are killed each year for fins. In a practice known as finning, the fins are removed and then the sharks are thrown back into the water to die. Ward 2 Councillor Pat Mullin, who in July introduced the original motion calling for a bylaw, said she felt the municipality was on solid ground despite the City's legal department previously telling councillors the City doesn't have the authority to enforce such a ban. However, the City, whose initial opposition cited the cruelty of shark finning, widened its scope to look at environmental and health concerns, which are covered in the Municipal Act. Under the Act, municipalities can regulate matters that affect the health, safety and well-being of residents. The City, in its new bylaw, states that "the consumption of shark fins and shark fin derivative products by humans may cause serious health risks, including risks from mercury." "I guess you can get eight lawyers in a room and each one of them might say something different, but I'm certainly convinced that we're in a position to move forward from an ecosystem perspective and certainly from a health perspective," said Mullin, adding several legal opinions she received indicates the City does have the authority to enforce a ban. **George Rust-D'Eye**, the City's interim integrity commissioner and a municipal law expert, has stated that municipalities have the power to impose such a ban. Mullin, who said last week that "... the slaughter of these animals is not the right thing to happen in any way, shape, form," expects there to be a grace period before the ban is enforced. Furthermore, she noted, the City will likely start with an information campaign.

A committee has been struck to work on a plan to enforce the bylaw and report back to Council.

Under the bylaw, a first-time offender could be hit with a fine of up to \$15,000 while subsequent convictions could carry a penalty of \$30,000. Victor Oh, honorary chair of the Mississauga Chinese Business Association, told councillors last month it's unfair to ban shark fin products here when other municipalities allow them. He also noted shark fin products aren't an everyday meal for most people. "This is not something (restaurants) have on the table

every night, but (only) for special occasions," said Oh. Councillors previously heard that of the 91 Chinese restaurants in Mississauga, nine offer some sort of shark fin dish.

Council also approved a motion to ask Health Canada to stop the importing of shark fin products, and try to convince other municipalities to join lobbying efforts in Ottawa to enact a ban on shark finning.

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