

## Toronto poised to ban shark fin sale; Licensing committee endorses veto called unfair by business group

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Page: GT4  
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Toronto City Council will almost certainly ban the sale and consumption of shark fin at its meeting on Oct. 24.

The city's licensing committee unanimously endorsed a ban on Thursday, and its chair, Councillor Cesar Palacio, said Mayor Rob Ford supported the decision.

"At city council, it's probably going to be a rubber-stamping. Hopefully we have, also, a unanimous vote," said Palacio, speaking at a rare joint media scrum with the left-leaning councillors who championed the proposal, Glenn De Baeremaeker and Kristyn Wong-Tam.

The proposed bylaw would impose steep fines on anyone caught selling, consuming or possessing shark fin: \$5,000 for a first offence, \$25,000 for a second, \$100,000 for a third or subsequent offence. Restaurant inspectors would check for shark fin during the regular course of their work.

Shark fin soup is a traditional Chinese delicacy often served at weddings. Proponents of a ban argue that "finning," the practice of severing fins from live sharks and tossing them back in the ocean to die, is inhumane.

They also say certain shark species have been endangered by demand for fins.

Brantford and Oakville recently enacted bans. California banned shark fin last Friday, while Mississauga did the same on Wednesday. An NDP MP plans to propose a national ban, and Councillor Michelle Berardinetti, whose husband is a Liberal MPP, said she knows provincial politicians will seek an Ontario ban.

The committee voted against the advice of city licensing chief Bruce Robertson, who argued the city does not have the authority to ban shark fin.

Top municipal lawyer **George Rust-D'Eye**, hired by the pro-ban Berardinetti, told the committee that Robertson was incorrect.

But **Rust-D'Eye** acknowledged that a lawsuit challenging a ban could result in a prolonged court battle that could end up in the Supreme Court.

The city would give restaurateurs until September 2012 to sell shark fin they had already purchased before the ban was enacted.

That concession was not sufficient for the Toronto Chinese Business Association, whose leaders urged

the committee to oppose a ban.

They argued that most sharks are not finned alive or even captured for their fins.

And they said it was unfair to the Chinese community to ban shark fin while permitting the sale of other shark products.

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