

Tory Alice Wong shows opposition to proposed ban while slurping shark fin soup (with video)

Tory MP opposes municipal ban

BY ALAN CAMPBELL, RICHMOND NEWS OCTOBER 14, 2012



MP Alice Wong enjoys a bowl of shark fin soup at the Jade Restaurant during a press conference yesterday at which she voiced her support of restaurant owner David Chung and her opposition to a municipal ban of the Asian delicacy.

Photograph by: Ming Pao, Richmond News

METRO VANCOUVER -- Member of Parliament Alice Wong was back in her hometown of Richmond on Thursday — eating a bowl of shark fin soup.

At the Jade restaurant, Wong spoke to Asian media only, as it appeared no English-speaking media were invited to the event.

According to Chinese media reports, Tory MP Wong reiterated her government's stance that the

banning of shark fin products, including the soup, is a federal responsibility — not that of municipalities.

Vancouver city council agreed last month that it will work with Richmond and Burnaby to develop a ban on the sale of shark-fin products. Port Moody, North Vancouver and Coquitlam have already imposed such a ban.

At Thursday's event, Wong appeared to be backing Jade restaurant owner David Chung's position that he is not breaking any laws by serving the shark fin soup and has every right to do so.

Kevin Huang, a spokesman for Shark Truth, a group that opposes the practice of shark finning, said his organization was unclear as to who Wong was representing.

"Currently, we're trying to figure out whether Alice Wong is representing the Conservative government, in other words the federal government in her stand, or if she's just going on her own.

"After we're clear on that, we'll be in a better position to make a comment. Since there was no official press statement, we're only going off our sources and the Chinese media. From what I understand, only Chinese media were invited."

Wong's communication adviser Robert Lynch said a media advisory was sent out by the Vancouver office, adding he would look into why no English-speaking media appeared to have been invited to the event.

Chung, who is also head of the B.C. Asian Restaurant and Cafe Owners Association, has said in the past he doesn't know if the soup he serves is derived from one of the many endangered shark species. And he has refused to hand over samples of his shark fins to the Vancouver Animal Defense League for DNA testing.

Chung has warned he'll declare war on any ban.

He claimed his shark fin products are federally approved and are not derived from the cruel act of finning, whereby sharks are caught, have their fins sliced off and then dumped back into the sea to die.

Chung said it's people's right to eat what they want and that any such ban is "culturally insensitive."

In his culture, serving a dish such as shark fin soup to someone is necessary to show sincerity in gratitude, he added.

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