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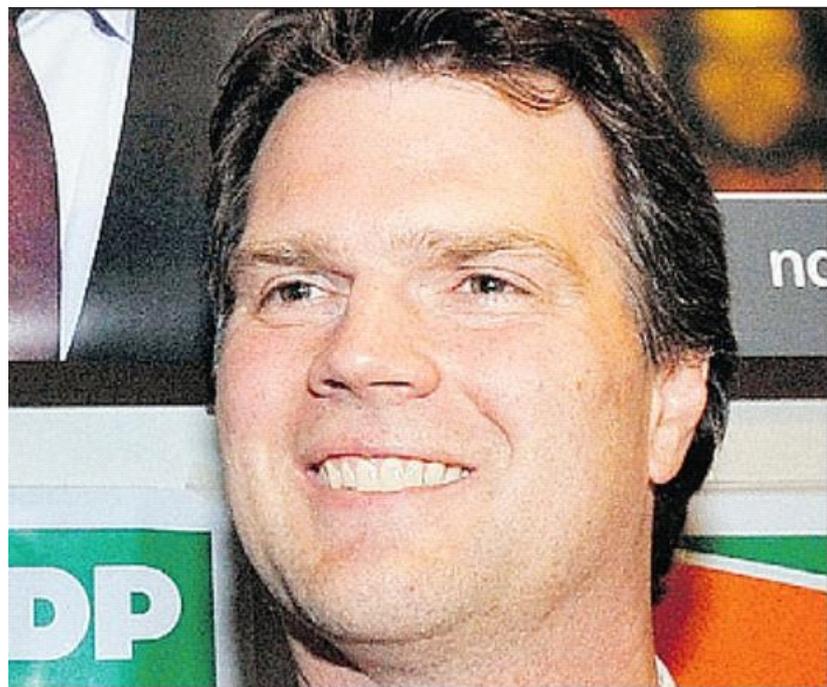
MP wants shark fin ban

BY CASSIDY OLIVIER, THE PROVINCE SEPTEMBER 18, 2011

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Fin Donnelly

Photograph by: Ian Lindsay - PNG, The Province

NDP Oceans and Fisheries critic Fin Donnelly plans to introduce a private member's bill during the fall sitting of the legislature seeking a ban on the importation of shark fins into Canada.

Harvesting of shark fins is already illegal in Canada and the U.S. but importing the delicacy is not, and there are many restaurants across the country that continue to serve traditional Chinese shark fin soup, a dish reserved for special occasions such as weddings.

Activists believe demand for the product is the reason why one-third of the world's shark population is endangered. And with no domestic import laws in place, fins have continued to flow into Canada from countries with little or no shark protection regulations.

Donnelly, MP for New Westminster-Coquitlam and Port Moody, said the legislation, if passed should help curb the controversial practice of shark finning, in which the shark's fins are sliced off and the animal is dumped back into the ocean to die.

"Once Canadians find out about the practice of shark finning, the people who've I talked to anyway, are pretty horrified that this actually goes on," said Donnelly. "I'm hoping to work with the other parties, especially the majority Conservatives, [and] I do believe there will be cross-party support to this."

News of the pending legislation was met with praise from Vancouver group Shark Truth, which seeks a ban on the serving of shark fin soup. Group founder Claudia Li noted there has already been a dramatic shift around the perception of eating shark fin, especially among younger consumers who are breaking from tradition.

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"It's different now than it was a year or two ago," she said, noting many local restaurants are not opposed to the idea of a ban on imports.

Donnelly said Friday that he's already embarked on a consultation process with business association on both coasts for input on the proposed legislation to make sure it addresses all necessary points. And so far, the feedback has been positive, he said.

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