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Shark fin ban sought in Vancouver

Local politicians a ban similar to Toronto's unlikely in Lower Mainland

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Hundreds of sharks were seized from a Taiwanese fishing vessel in Palau in August. (Associated Press/Micronesian Shark Foundation)

A Vancouver activist is celebrating a decision by Toronto to ban the use and sale of shark fins in the city, and hopes the precedent will pressure Vancouver to make a similar move.

Claudia Li, founder of the Shark Truth campaign, has been pushing Lower Mainland restaurants to take shark fin soup off the menu.

"I'm extremely excited," Li told CBC News. "The fact that Toronto passed this ban makes a huge statement for all of Canada and the rest of the world that we need healthy oceans and healthy shark populations."

Toronto councillors capped off a months-long debate and voted by a decisive 38-4 margin Tuesday to institute the ban.

The bylaw will ban any use of shark fin and will impose fines ranging from \$5,000 for a first offence to \$100,000 for a third offence.

The use of shark fin for soups is widespread, especially in China, where it's often a menu item at weddings and other celebrations. Millions of sharks are reported to be slaughtered for their fins alone every year in an industry estimated to be worth \$1 billion annually.

No plan in Vancouver

Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson said there are no plans to follow Toronto's lead. Robertson said it wouldn't make sense for Vancouver to be acting alone among Metro municipalities.

"We would need it across the region so it was equitable for all the restaurants, meaning that different cities in the region would have to co-operate, or we would need a provincial ban for shark fin soup."

Oakville, Ont. and Mississauga, Ont., near Toronto also have moved to ban shark fins.

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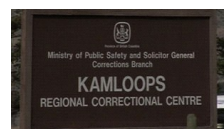
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Vancouver Councillor Kerry Jang said that rather than outlawing the fins, the city is working with Li's group to try and curb the use of shark fin.

"When there was a ban for other types of animal products, like rhino horn, tiger testicles and bear paws, what we did see in Vancouver was growth in the black market," Jang said. "We don't want to see that happen with shark fin."



Shark fins cost about \$600 a pound, says one Toronto importer. Canadian Press

Jang said more than 300 people attended a recent event held in the Chinese community to come up with alternatives to shark fin soup.

With files from the CBC's Robert Zimmerman

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