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Activists were present on both sides of the argument Tuesday, as city council voted in favour of a shark-fin ban.
PHOTO BY: IRENE PREKLET/680NEWS

Toronto city council votes in favour of banning shark fins

Irene Preklet, Jaime Pulfer, Sherry Morely and 680News staff » Oct 25, 2011 18:13:12 PM

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TORONTO, Ont. - Despite opposition and protest from some, Toronto city council has voted in favour of banning the possession and consumption of shark fins.

The controversial decision comes even after Mayor Rob Ford said he

doesn't think it's the city's responsibility to ban the sale of shark fins.

Council voted overwhelmingly in favour of the ban to the tune of 38-4, and now appears to be urging other GTA communities to follow suit.

Despite the vote being passed, some members of Ford's inner-circle were not convinced.

"There's all these misconceptions about what they're doing; it's been going on for so long. I don't know why all of a sudden they're making an issue. My personal vote, no, I'm not going to support the ban," Ford said.

Meanwhile, for many who supported the ban the severity of the issue was highlighted perfectly by Toronto filmmaker Rob Stewart in his documentary, "[Sharkwater](#)."

Approximately 100 anti-shark fin ban protestors gathered outside City Hall on Tuesday. Many expressed worry that a ban would hurt the restaurant industry.

Coun. Glenn De Baeremaeker countered by saying the ban is not an attack on city businesses, and that taking shark-fin soup off the menu certainly won't mean bankruptcy.

Nearly 200 people gathered outside City Hall Monday to protest the proposition, many wearing signs calling the potential ban an "unfair and irresponsible act."

Barbara Chiu, with the Toronto Chinese Business Association, said the city needs to reconsider the proposition.

"Endangered species and the shark fisheries should be taken care of by the federal government," Chiu said. "We hope city council can vote by rationale and information instead of emotion."

The protestors mostly avoided comment on the ethical issue of shark finning, instead focusing on the fact that it isn't a local issue. Clearly, city council was not convinced.

"For a city the size and influence of Toronto to pass a shark fin bill is a historic moment for Canada," said Claudia Li, founder of Shark Truth, a non-profit organization supporting shark conservation. "Councillors are setting an example of how we can protect sharks from the wasteful practice of finning."

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Toronto is now the fourth city in Ontario to enact a shark fin ban, joining Brantford, Oakville, and Mississauga. The U.S. state of California enacted a state-wide shark fin ban earlier this month, on October 7th.

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