

# Bylaw banning shark fin use nears approval

By David Lea  
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

Oakville's Administrative Services Committee voted unanimously Tuesday night to join the growing number of municipalities banning shark fin products within their borders.

The bylaw, which would come into effect immediately if passed by council on Monday, bans the possession, sale, offer for sale, trade or distribution of shark fins or shark fin products within Oakville.

In a report to the committee, Town staff recommended against the bylaw, stating it would be difficult to enforce and such a law was actually within the federal government's jurisdiction.

These concerns, however, did not stop the committee from making its decision.

"Sometimes the municipalities have to do the right thing and take a lead role. The City of Toronto and other municipalities have also come to the forefront saying, 'We've got to do the right thing.' We can't just finger point and say, 'It's their responsibility,'" said Ward 2 Town and Regional Councillor Cathy Duddeck.

"This is similar to ... the pesticide bylaw where we enacted a bylaw and then later on the Province saw fit to come through with its own. So, hopefully, the federal government will listen to all the various municipalities who feel this is an important issue."



OAKVILLE BEAVER FILE PHOTO

**SAVING SHARKS:** Oakville is soon to join other municipalities in banning shark fin products in Oakville.

The report said there is no shortage of need for a ban on shark finning as approximately 70 million to 100 million sharks are killed annually for their fins. As a result, many shark species are threatened with extinction in the next 10 years.

As top predators in the food chain, the disappearance of sharks will have a profound impact on the balance of marine ecosystems.

Shark finning has also been described as a particularly cruel process, involving the removal of fins from live sharks, which are then thrown back in the ocean to die.

The report said the consumption of shark fins and shark fin derivative products by humans may cause serious health risks, including risks from mercury.

Shark finning has been banned in Canadian waters since 1994. However, in much of the country, shark fins can be sold in frozen or dried form.

Shark fin soup is considered a delicacy among segments of the Asian community.

Shark fin bans are now in place in the municipalities of Brantford, Mississauga and Toronto, with Pickering, Hamilton and Brampton currently reviewing the issue.



Cathy Duddeck

Those found guilty of violating the Oakville bylaw will face a fine of up to \$15,000 upon their first conviction and up to \$30,000 on any subsequent conviction.

Town staff said problems with enforcement stem from the fact the bylaw would permit inspection of commercial premises, i.e. restaurants and stores, for shark fin violations, but would not cover dwellings. Bylaw officers would be required to get the permission of the occupant, a court order or a judicially approved search warrant to conduct such an inspection.

The committee also voted to request Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency prohibit the import of shark fins and shark fin food products into Canada and enforce this national ban vigorously.

The Oakville bylaw does not address shark cartilage products, which are currently being sold in Oakville.

Town staff pointed out that neither Mississauga nor Toronto dealt with shark cartilage in their bylaws as shark cartilage products have medical applications the municipalities did not want to inhibit.

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