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The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, & Education

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HISTORIC TORONTO LEGISLATION PROTECTS SHARKS

Canada's Largest City Adopts Shark Fin Ban

Toronto, Canada – 25 October 2011 – Toronto, Canada's largest city, enacted a bylaw banning shark fins today. The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education (COARE), applauds the City of Toronto for joining them in their work to actively address shark conservation issues, and their attempts to reduce shark fin consumption in North America and worldwide.

Toronto's City Council today voted 38-4 to back the motion introduced by Councillor Glenn De Baeremaeker (Ward 38 Scarborough Centre) and seconded by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam (Ward 27 Toronto Centre-Rosedale) earlier this year to prohibit the sale, possession, and consumption of shark fins in Toronto.

As Canada's largest city, and with one of the greatest populations of Chinese-Canadians in the nation, Toronto is one of the top consumers of shark fins in Canada.

"We've voted to save sharks in Toronto because of people like Christopher Chin giving powerful, persuasive evidence on the need to ban shark fin products in jurisdictions around the world," said Toronto City Councillor Glenn De Baeremaeker, who introduced the motion.

Christopher Chin, COARE's Executive Director, made a special appearance at the City Council's Licensing and Standards Committee meeting on 13 October, where he diffused claims of a ban's purported cultural bias, and provided valuable insight to the recent legislative actions throughout the western U.S. Drawing on similarities between the processes, Chin urged the Committee's support of this measure.

"We're honored to have participated in this process, and we're absolutely thrilled that Toronto is setting such a wonderful example," said Chin. "Not only will this bylaw save many sharks in its own right, but it will also influence, inform, and encourage the process in other municipalities and at higher levels of government," continued Chin. "We look forward to a now brighter future for our oceans."

The motion (MM9.3) was introduced by Councillor De Baeremaeker on 14 June 2011, and was subsequently referred to the Licensing and Standards committee (LSC). The Committee heard the matter on 09 September and referred it to City staff for a report. The matter came before the LSC again on 13 October 2011, and the Committee voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council adoption of the proposed Bylaw.

Every year, fins from up to 73 million sharks are used for shark fin soup, a dish traditionally served at Chinese weddings and banquets. This soup has grown in popularity, increasing consumer demand for shark fins and contributing to the decimation of shark populations worldwide as millions of sharks are killed every month, many for their fins alone. As a result of these fishing pressures, one-third of shark species are already threatened with extinction.

Toronto's ban complements similar legislation recently adopted by neighboring Ontario cities Brantford and Mississauga. Toronto's ban also follows closely on the heels of California Assembly Bill 376, which Governor Jerry Brown signed into law earlier this month. It is also preceded by legislative bans already adopted by Washington, Oregon, Hawai'i, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Fiji, and the Bahamas.

About COARE

The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education, Inc. (COARE) is a tax-exempt nonprofit organization based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Its purpose is to study our oceans and increase public awareness of the earth's marine environment through educational programs and outreach. COARE seeks to enlighten people, young and old, to the plight of the oceans, to change the way they think and act, and to encourage them to create positive and lasting change. For more information about COARE, visit <http://www.coare.org>.

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