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## Stintz embraces Ford bag plan

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TORONTO - Mayor Rob Ford has an ally in TTC chair Karen Stintz when it comes to his fight to scrap Toronto's 5-cent bag fee bylaw.

Although Ford and Councillor Stintz had an epic battle over transit earlier this year, Stintz says she will support Ford's efforts this week to trash the fee brought in by former mayor David Miller back in 2009.

Stintz originally voted against the fee and said she'll vote with Ford to kill it.

"I voted against the bylaw because the city has no jurisdiction to tell retailers what to charge for the price of their goods," Stintz said.

"I understand it was a social experiment in behavioural change, from my perspective it has been successful - Loblaw's is charging for bags across the country.

"It doesn't seem to me necessary that we should continue to implement a tax that we have no authority to impose."

Toronto politicians will consider tossing out the fee at Wednesday's city council meeting. Ford managed to get his executive committee to vote to rescind the three-year-old bag fee last month but when it comes to this week's council vote, it isn't clear yet if he's got a majority of votes in the bag.

Although Ford didn't campaign on eliminating the fee, councillors around City Hall say the mayor's office has been working to line up the votes to win the bag fee fight.

Asked about the looming vote, Ford was "optimistic" enough councillors would vote to kill the fee effective July 1.

"It's going to be close but we might be able to pull it off," he said.

Other councillors weren't keen on Ford's push to banish the bag fee.

Councillor Mike Layton said rescinding the bag fee was the wrong course of action and wants to see council leave the fee as it is.

"Eliminating stuff from our waste stream actually saves the city money so this is stuff that doesn't cost us anything but saves us money in the end," Layton said.

Councillor Sarah Doucette pointed out her efforts to rebuild the Jamie Bell Playground in High Park were helped by Canadian Tire donating \$50,000 in bag fee proceeds.

"People are giving it back to the city," she said.

Bag fee foe Councillor Gloria Lindsay Luby doubted if the bylaw was lifted that retailers would stop charging shoppers for plastic bags.

"I feel Toronto has done its bit already and we don't need to do further," she said.

Lindsay Luby said at the time councillors voted for the fee they were told it would only apply to big retailers.

"Suddenly we find every business has to follow this bylaw, it is mandatory. I think that is wrong," she said. "The city doesn't have the authority to make it mandatory and it should go." Councillor Josh Colle - who could be a crucial swing vote in the bag fee issue - said it was unfortunate council was spending time on a debate that was "very low" on the pecking order of what's important for the city.

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"It has been a success to date and you can't keep a tax in place forever so I'm open to the removal based on that," Colle said. "But I'm still waiting to see how the debate plays out to decide how I'll vote."

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