



Graffiti Prevention & Control

“To a graffiti writer, a blank wall in the city represents many more bad things than any writing on it could. Blank walls are ugly and repressive”.

- A graffiti writer on the internet

As the above sentiment suggests, people who write graffiti see the world as a very different place from those who don't. As uncontrolled graffiti can start a cycle of fear and decay, it is important that people have a basic understanding of graffiti and know the best ways to control it.

TAGGING vs. WRITING

Most graffiti is the work of “taggers” and “writers”. Taggers engage in the most basic forms of graffiti, which generally involve a personal, stylized (difficult to read) signature. Taggers are generally motivated to get their signature (or tag), “up” as many times as possible. Tags within our region, are seldom gang related. Writers are generally responsible for the more artistic forms of graffiti. Graffiti writers often work in small groups called crews and have been known to take significant risks for the purpose of displaying their “art” in highly visible spots. Writers can be competitive amongst themselves, which can result in the proliferation of graffiti.

WHY GRAFFITI PREVENTION & CONTROL IS SO IMPORTANT

James Q. Wilson, the co-author of “Broken Windows”, wrote: *“What really made people afraid in cities and concerned about their welfare, was not the crimes they saw or heard about, but also the*

physical and social signs they saw around them registering a breakdown in society”.

Unauthorized graffiti, while often unreported, is a Criminal Offence that:

- annually costs taxpayers hundreds of thousand of dollars;
- defaces structures and vehicles;
- results in the cancellation of school programs when funds are spent removing graffiti;
- generates fear, and;
- leads to more serious crime.

Aside from the obvious economic costs and loss of social and economic activity, undesired and unremoved graffiti sends a strong message, that private property is not respected and no one really cares. In order to correct this perception, it is vital that you clear graffiti from your property as soon as possible in the event it happens. Graffiti is contrary to your community's property standards by law and, if not removed, may result in a contravention of The City of Toronto Graffiti Bylaw (Municipal Code, Chapter 485).

GRAFFITI PREVENTION

The best way to prevent graffiti is to never let it happen. This is best accomplished at the design stage by using textured surfaces or limiting

available surfaces. Where the environment has already been built, graffiti is best prevented by ensuring proper maintenance and the strategic use of:

- plants and other vegetation;
- murals, and;
- where circumstances dictate, protective coating over walls.

For best results, ivies and plant species with thorns should be used. Avoid large plantings where they block sightlines around windows and doors, or create hidden spots next to walkways.

GRAFFITI CONTROL: TIMELY CLEAN-UP

In the event that you are the victim of graffiti, timely clean-up will stop its spread and limit its recurrence. Graffiti taggers and writers are unlikely to return to locations that do not offer a good payback for their risk, time and money (artistic pieces may require up to 20 cans of spray paint).

Timely clean-up will:

- save you money in the long run;
- demonstrate ownership of your property;
- ensure that your property complies with property standards by-laws;
- maintain the value of your property.

For assistance in obtaining environmentally friendly graffiti removal see “Building Cleaning – Exterior”, in your local telephone listings.

