



Toronto Police Service
Graffiti Management Program

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Toronto Police Service - Graffiti Management Program

The Toronto Police Service (TPS) and the City of Toronto are working together as partners to reduce graffiti vandalism for a safer community. The presence of graffiti vandalism suggests disorder and lawlessness. Graffiti vandalism can contribute to decline in property value and, more importantly, generates the perception of increased crime and fear of gang activity.

The TPS is currently enhancing its Graffiti Management Program in partnership with the City of Toronto and community counterparts. This program will integrate and reflect the principles of the new Ontario Mobilization and Engagement Model on Community Policing (see Appendix "A"). The program is a balanced approach to effectively manage graffiti vandalism by members of the TPS, its community partners and consultative groups.

The TPS Graffiti Management Program will incorporate five key elements:

Enforcement

It is important to suppress crime and use enforcement in the early phases of the Graffiti Program to reduce the threats to community safety and security whether it is real or perceived. The core mandate of police officers is to investigate and arrest anyone who is believed to have committed a criminal offence. Graffiti vandalism on private or public property without the consent of the owner is a criminal offence of mischief.

Intelligence Gathering/Management

The development of a centralized graffiti vandalism database, in partnership with city and community agencies, is key to effectively managing graffiti vandalism. The TPS is researching various graffiti vandalism databases throughout Canada and the United States to determine the most cost effective method to inventory and track graffiti vandalism. The City of Toronto – 311 Program is developing a method to house graffiti tags from members of the community. The TPS is continuing its discussions with the City of Toronto as research and development continues to progress into the fall of 2011.

Community Partnerships / Engagement

A key component to combating graffiti vandalism is developing and enhancing community partnerships. The TPS currently has long standing partnerships with: The City of Toronto, Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), Toronto Community Housing Corp. (TCHC), 14 City Business Improvement Assoc. (BIAs), 19 local divisional Community Police Liaison Committees (CPLCs) and 10 Community Consultative Committees. Members of these community agencies and community consultative groups will receive education in combating graffiti vandalism. Graffiti education will also be

integrated with instruction on the Ontario Mobilization & Engagement Model of Community Policing.

Education

Research has established that early education for youth is critical for future growth and development. The TPS Graffiti Management Program addresses youth and community education. As described in the Mobilization Model on Community Policing, it is important to mobilize and engage all members of the community affected by graffiti vandalism. As an appropriate response, community and youth education will be administered by specialized TPS officers at each of the 17 divisions: Community School Liaison Officers (CSLO), School Resource Officers (SRO), Crime Prevention Officers (CPO) and Community Relations Officers (CRO).

The TPS is in the process of developing graffiti vandalism lesson plans in conjunction with local school boards. CSLO officers will deliver these graffiti vandalism lesson plans to elementary school youth from grades 1 to 8. SRO officers will deliver graffiti vandalism presentations to young persons in secondary schools from grades 9 to 12.

Additionally, CPO and CRO officers will play a pivotal role within the community education component of the program. These officers will conduct graffiti vandalism presentations for community members and stakeholders on how to respond to graffiti vandalism using the Mobilization Model of Community Policing. The officers will incorporate and recommend various graffiti vandalism reduction resources that are available to community members. While the removal of graffiti is not the responsibility of the TPS, there will be occasions when our Divisional Officers can play a role in working with the City of Toronto and other Community partners in this regard.

Restorative Justice-Diversion

Research has shown that the majority of graffiti vandals are young persons. The Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA), sec. 6(1), refers to police officers and the actions they shall consider with respect to diversion. This specifically refers to an alternative to the regular court process for young persons who commit a criminal offence for the first time providing it is a non-violent offence such as graffiti vandalism. Currently, the TPS has a pilot project in Scarborough and Etobicoke that utilizes Youth Crime Crown Attorneys, local community centers and youth community service agencies. Young persons are diverted to art programs and community organizations that educate, coach and mentor youth. Activities include: assisting in graffiti removal, creating public murals and attending art forums. After further evaluation and measurement, it is hoped that this pilot will be expanded to all 17 police divisions across Toronto.

Youth Engagement

A key element of the Graffiti Management Program is the education and engagement of youth. The TPS will involve the Youth In Policing Initiative (YIPI), students by having

them work with Divisional Graffiti Liaison Officers, Auxiliary members, City of Toronto staff and local community members. A core group of 5 YIPI students will be identified and equipped to participate in approved graffiti removal projects. It is anticipated that YIPI students from across the TPS will be given the opportunity to participate in graffiti removal projects during the summer 2011.

Role of Divisional Graffiti Liaison Officers

An existing officer in each of the 17 TPS Divisions has been designated as a contact/liaison for graffiti issues and will work with the Community Response Unit (CRU). The Divisional Graffiti Liaison Officer will also work with the Community Mobilization Graffiti Liaison officer, identify local divisional graffiti issues, act as a resource to divisional personnel and community members, liaise with the local City of Toronto Councillor and Municipal Licensing Standards staff, assist in delivering educational programs designed to address graffiti crime concerns, and, help prevent and reduce graffiti vandalism and criminal activity.

Role of the Auxiliary Program

Auxiliary members selected for the Graffiti Management Program will receive enhanced training and will work in conjunction with the Divisional Graffiti Officer at each of the 17 police divisions.

In this supporting role, Auxiliary members will be expected to assist the Divisional Graffiti Officer with any Service/unit graffiti vandalism initiatives including: graffiti identification, reporting graffiti to the City of Toronto (via – 311 Program) and organizing, attending and participating in graffiti vandalism education/eradication events hosted in or by the community. These Auxiliary members will also support and assist divisional CPO/CROs with the distribution of any related crime prevention information materials in relation to this strategy. Additionally, Auxiliary members will liaise with and support the City of Toronto and our community partners with their graffiti vandalism initiatives.

The integration of Auxiliary members will provide an efficient use of available resources to enhance and support the TPS Graffiti Management Program at the divisional level.

Conclusion

Using the principles of Ontario's Mobilization and Engagement Model of Community Policing, the TPS in partnership with the community will address the issues attributed to graffiti vandalism in local neighbourhoods. The TPS Graffiti Management Program requires a balanced approach integrating the actions and initiatives of police officers to motivate and support neighbours to deal more effectively with the root causes of crime and insecurity in their neighbourhoods caused by the graffiti vandalism.

APPENDIX "A"

