

Spray paint vandalism is a crime

Spray paint vandalism or “graffiti” is the unauthorized etching, painting or placing of a mark on public or private property.

While some people may hear the word graffiti and think of it as an art form or a mode of freestyle expression, the reality is that graffiti is an act of vandalism that costs Winnipeg taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to remove or cover.

Tagging is destructive

The most common type of graffiti in the city of Winnipeg is “tagging” which is the writing and/or painting of an identifiable symbolic character or “tag” that may or may not contain letters. The tag becomes a “signature” for the vandal who may experience pride and a developing recognition among other taggers.

- **Tagging Graffiti** – Individuals involved in this form of graffiti refer to themselves as taggers or graffiti writers. They gain fame and status from other taggers by painting their distinctive tags in as many places as possible. They may also paint “pieces,” which are highly stylized murals. This form of graffiti is usually illegible to the untrained eye and intended to be seen by other taggers.
- **Gang Graffiti** – This form of graffiti is less common and gang members or their associates are responsible. Gang graffiti is a method of communication that is used to promote a gang, mark territory, recruit new members or to intimidate a neighbourhood.

In either circumstance, vandals disregard the rights of property owners, seek notoriety and generally disrespect community rules, laws and consequences.

Anything but a “victimless” crime

Spray paint vandalism often occurs on public property meaning bridges, utility boxes, and signage; individual citizens can be directly affected when they find their garages, vehicles and fences have been “tagged”.

In addition to the associated costs with removal, graffiti can result in an area looking unsafe or intimidating. It reduces property values and can create an open invitation for more littering, loitering and can invite even more vandalism. It may also lead to an increase in other criminal behaviour and acts of violence. And overall, a graffiti-ridden city does not leave a good impression with tourists and other visitors.

The Graffiti Removal team is on the job as quickly as possible year-round. The City spends over \$1 million annually on graffiti removal.

Our goal

We are working towards our goal of a clean, safe, graffiti-free city by:

- Removing graffiti as quickly as possible.
- Increasing community capacity to manage graffiti.
- Enhancing civic pride and prosperity for residents and businesses.
- Encouraging the use of prevention techniques.
- Providing easy and accessible reporting options.
- Supporting residents and businesses with appropriate tools and resources.
- Involving businesses, residents, youth, community organizations and graffiti writers as partners.
- Adopting best practices and research based solutions to manage graffiti.



RECORD

It's a great idea to quickly snap a photo of the graffiti even using your mobile device.

This helps investigators determine patterns and to link the offender to other crimes.

Email the photo to 311@winnipeg.ca.

REPORT

All graffiti incidents, whether in progress or not, can be reported to the police non-emergency number: 204-986-6222.

- If the incident is in progress a police unit may be dispatched. Call police as soon as possible.
- If the incident is not in progress but you wish to make a report of the graffiti, a report will be taken over the phone.

You may also call Crime Stoppers to anonymously report incidents of vandalism 204-786-TIPS (8477).

To report existing graffiti on any property (public or private), call the City of Winnipeg at



311
City Services

REMOVE

If you are a victim of graffiti, it is important that you remove it as soon as possible - ideally within 48 to 72 hours.

- Rapid removal sends a clear message that defacing your property is not acceptable.
- Recurrence is significantly reduced.
- Removal products work best on newly applied graffiti.
- Rapid removal eliminates the public recognition sought by graffiti vandals.
- Rapid removal of graffiti keeps your property and neighbourhood clean and attractive.



Helpful tips for graffiti removal

The following information is to be used as a guide only.

Non-Sensitive Surfaces

(painted wood siding, painted concrete, etc.)

- Apply a stain-killing primer or pigmented shellac. This seals the graffiti and keeps it from bleeding through fresh paint.
- Repaint the surface with an appropriate colour. Poor paint jobs can lead to more graffiti; try to match.

Sensitive Surfaces

(brick, stucco, metal, glass, etc.)

Brick, Cement, Concrete

- Use extra strength paint remover or graffiti remover. Apply with a wire brush and allow it to dry. Rinse with a forceful stream of water.

Stucco

- Use paint remover and wash off with a high-pressure water hose.
- Use stucco paint and carefully cover graffiti.

Metal, Aluminum Siding, Fiberglass

- Use carburetor cleaner.
- Use paint remover sparingly; rinse carefully.

Glass, Plexiglass

- Use carburetor cleaner if regular cleaners do not work. Use caution with Plexiglass as it scratches easily.

Consult your local paint store for advice and clarification on the pros and cons of graffiti removal techniques or call the City of Winnipeg Graffiti Control Program Hotline at **311**.

Request help

The City of Winnipeg Public Works
Department



- Assists individuals or groups in the community interested in organizing graffiti paint-outs.
- Provides paint and supplies to assist groups, individuals and victims willing to remove graffiti in their community.
- For more information regarding the by-laws for graffiti, visit:
winnipeg.ca/publicworks/graffiti/bylaw.asp

The City of Winnipeg Public Works Department offers a free year-round graffiti removal service; however, due to volumes, there may be a delay until we are able to get there.



Winnipeg Police Service

- Call the Winnipeg Police Service at 204-986-6222 if you see spray paint vandalism in progress.
- Works with the community to prevent graffiti through enforcement, prevention, education and awareness programs.

Take Pride Winnipeg



- Focuses on education programs, organizes volunteer paint-outs and manages the citywide mural program.
- Works in cooperation with the City of Winnipeg.
- Call Take Pride Winnipeg at 204-956-7590.

Volunteer programs

Volunteers can strengthen our community and help make Winnipeg a graffiti-free city.

Participating as a volunteer in the graffiti management program has numerous benefits for you and your neighbourhood including:

- Building capacity to manage graffiti in your neighbourhood.
- Bringing residents together to develop community solutions.
- Becoming a role model in your community.
- Proactively engaging neighbours to prevent crime.
- Increasing safety and cleanliness.
- Helping to promote and maintain healthy neighbourhoods.

You can become involved

- The Graffiti Control Program offers free removal materials available from the Winnipeg Police Service Centres. Pick up your free graffiti removal towels or a coupon for a free gallon of paint and commit to removing graffiti from your property.
- Organize a community graffiti removal event. Planning a graffiti removal event doesn't have to be complicated. All it takes is enthusiasm and some careful planning. The City of Winnipeg can support you by providing removal supplies and additional resources if required.

**Together we can help wipe out
spray paint vandalism.**

winnipeg.ca/graffiticontrol



**SPRAY
PAINT
VANDALISM
IS A SERIOUS CRIME!**

**Help make Winnipeg
TAG-free.**

