

## **Cut graffiti by restricting sale of paint, councillor says**

June 23, 2007

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Toronto Star

A Toronto city councillor is hoping to make it a little harder for young spray paint artists to practise their trade.

In a letter going to council's licensing and standards committee next Friday, Councillor Paul Ainslie (Ward 43, Scarborough East) says he wants to prohibit the sale of spray paint to anyone under age 18 to reduce "graffiti and tagging." Tags are painted symbols identifying an individual or group, including a gang's turf.

"Although this measure alone will not eliminate graffiti, it will make the accessibility to spray paint ... more difficult to obtain," he wrote.

Ainslie said the ban would require store owners to request identification from spray paint purchasers and might force them to keep the cans behind a counter or locked up.

In an interview, Ainslie said graffiti is a big problem in parts of his ward, especially Guildwood.

"People spray-paint garbage cans, postal boxes, anything that stands still long enough," he said. "I think it's like the broken window theory, where if you let it go, you get more and more broken windows. It's the same with graffiti, and this (proposed ban) is another tool."

London, Ont., last year joined some U.S. cities in banning the sale of "graffiti implements" to minors. Retailers who break the bylaw face fines as high as \$5,000.

"It took some hard work, but we're the first in Canada to do this and I think it's great," said London Councillor Bernie MacDonald, who pushed for the bylaw.

"It's ludicrous," countered David Winninger, another London councillor. "It's offensive to the Charter of Rights. It's not reasonable that it can be justified in a free and democratic society."