

# Arson blamed for Pickering fire

*Another home on federal lands goes up in flames*

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PICKERING -- Investigators say arson is the cause of the most recent fire on the federal lands in Pickering.

Pickering firefighters were called to a blaze at 350 Concession Rd. 7 just before 2 a.m. March 20 when a motorist passing by saw the flames and called it in.

"It was fully involved by the time the fire department got there," said Pickering fire inspector Steve Fowlds, adding the floors were already collapsed on the arrival of six fire trucks.

Following an investigation, there was no question as to how the fire started, he said.

"We know it was an arson," he said.

Pickering historian John Sabean said the Turner-Winger house was built in the 1860s or 1870s, possibly earlier.

"It's what we call 'Ontario classic,'" he said of the brick, central-gable, storey-and-a-half home.

The home sat on land expropriated by the federal government in 1972 for a possible airport, which hasn't been decided on yet. Since then, residents have been renting from the government, and many homes have been vacated and boarded up over time.

Mr. Sabean said the home was empty when he wrote a report on it six or seven years ago. Although Transport Canada provides security for the abandoned homes, he's concerned that the vandalism on the lands will continue as long as the homes are vacant.

"The more houses that are emptied and boarded up means the fewer eyes there are in the area to observe any mischief that might be taking place, whether it's theft or arson or whatever it may be," he said.

Mr. Fowlds said it's important that people remember someone could be badly hurt by these fires, whether it's the individuals who set the fire, possible squatters living in the home or firefighters.

"I really hopes this stops sooner rather than later," he said.

