

New fire chief takes over in Pickering

John Hagg has been with Pickering Fire Services since 1987

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PICKERING -- When John Hagg was a kid growing up in Pickering, he never imagined one day being the city's fire chief.

"I'm very lucky to be able to work in the community where I played hockey as a kid, and where I live now," he says.

On March 1 he took over Pickering's top firefighter post, after Bill Douglas wrapped up a 42-year career and 12 years as chief.

Chief Hagg has a long history with Pickering Fire Services.

He started out as a part-time volunteer firefighter back in 1987, then became full-time the following year. Over the decades he moved up through the ranks, eventually becoming deputy chief in 2011.

During that time, Pickering Fire Services has grown from having two full-time and two volunteer stations to four full-time stations today, staffed by 94 firefighters.

Chief Hagg says there is a lot more growth on the horizon.

"Seaton will be a big change for us," he says. "We will have to look at how to staff the new stations, and how to cover such a large geographic area. There will be some challenges."

However, Chief Hagg feels confident taking the reins, saying he learned a lot from his predecessor.

"I learned from Bill that it's important to build relationships, whether it's here or at City Hall or in the community," he says. "He put us on a great path and I'm going to continue that."

The outgoing chief had equally kind words for his replacement, describing Chief Hagg as "excellent choice."



PICKERING -- John Hagg is taking over as Pickering's new fire chief as of March 1. February 28, 2014

"He comes from a firefighting background," he says. "He'll keep things going forward for us. I'm so glad the City chose him. They're getting an excellent chief for many years to come."

-- With files from Keith Gilligan