



JOHN VAN PUTTEN PHOTOS / The Abbotsford News

Khalsa Diwan Society member and head of the reconstruction committee, Norm Sangha is looking forward to April 1 when the Gur Sikh Temple on South Fraser Way reopens. The historic temple was built in 1911. Below: Steel poles which were used to hold the Sikh flag are preserved in a special glass case at the front steps of the temple.

'This is something from our pioneers'

Restoring temple pride

by SHEENA JACKSON
Abbotsford News

AFTER FOUR years of planning and hard work and at a cost of almost \$2.5 million, the Gur Sikh Temple perched on a hill on Abbotsford's South Fraser Way will reopen its doors next month.

President of the Khalsa Diwan Society Gurdarshan Singh Sandhu is expecting a crowd of up to 5,000 to attend on April 1. Among those that Sandhu is hoping will be there is Premier Gordon Campbell, as well as a number of local dignitaries.

Funds for the restoration project is a mixture of grant money (\$550,000), \$600,000 from fundraising and a \$1 million bank loan.

The two-and-a-half-storey building was built in 1911 and, in 2002, it was designated as a national

historic site at a ceremony attended by former Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

At that ceremony Chretien called the temple "... a humble building, but a building with a great history."

Head of the reconstruction committee Norm Sangha agrees.

"This is something from our pioneers," he said. "This is our history."

When it was built in 1911, Sangha said the pioneers were earning 10 cents an hour but that they still managed "to keep their faith alive."

Sikh men working at the Abbotsford Lumber Company carried donated lumber on their backs, for more than a kilometre, from Mill Lake to build the temple.

See 'TEMPLE' on page A4





**Khalsa Diwan
Society treasurer
and director Randhir
Kailey checks what
work needs to be
done before the
temple reopens on
April 1.**

JOHN VAN PUTTEN /
The Abbotsford News