

Bridge site vandalism \$150,000

By Sean Prpich

BORDEN (Staff) — As much as \$150,000 worth of vandalism done last weekend to heavy equipment at the new Borden Bridge site has failed to seriously delay the project.

Rick Nemanishen of Nemanishen Contracting Ltd. from Langham, told the News-Optimist someone entered the construction site early Sunday, Oct. 30 and punctured tires on 16 large vehicles.

Saskatoon RCMP are continuing to investigate the incident, and, as of yet, have no suspects.

Mr. Nemanishen said his company lost tires on eight earthmovers, a grader, a backhoe, and one earth pusher.

In addition, he said, Henry Fehr of North Battleford's Northern Construction lost tires on four earthmovers and one grader parked at the site.

Mr. Fehr could not be reached for comment on the vandalism.

Mr. Nemanishen said the vandalism would not slow construction on the new bridge's earthwork.

Repairs were done the morning after the incident by placing bolts through the punctured five-centimetre sidewalls of the tires. The tires were then pumped back up to full pressure.

But the repairs are only temporary.

The tires can be used until work ends with the first snowfall, but will have to be replaced before winter construction begins, sometime in January, explained Mr. Nemanishen.

Asked about the replacement costs on the punctured tires — 44 tires in total — he said: "You're looking at \$150,000." Insurance will cover only part of the cost because of depreciation on the worn tires, he added.

Mr. Nemanishen expects the tires to be difficult to get in Saskatchewan. Since heavy equipment tires are rarely replaced, only a few are held by dealers around the province.

Talking about the incident, the contractor says he's not sure how the tires were punctured, but is certain it wasn't done with a gun, as earlier reported by the RCMP.

"I don't think it was a gun ... we tore one of those tires apart and we didn't find anything in it," he said, referring to a search for a bullet.

Mr. Nemanishen related, according to his night watchman, the incident occurred sometime between 12 midnight and 6 a.m. Sunday. Normally the watchman patrols from the end of working hours till midnight and then sleeps until 6 a.m.

He said the watchman heard nothing, not surprising considering a noisy power generating plant was operating at the site.

The watchman awoke to find the tires punctured. Mr. Nemanishen said a stranger's footprints were also found at the site near the damaged vehicles.

Asked about a motive, Mr. Nemanishen said he didn't know if there was one.

"That's what's got us so baffled. Who'd want to shut us down? And there were no calls afterward, or anything."

He went on, "What can

you say? What can you do? You can jump up and down but you can't do anything about it."

Asked if he thought it was a day-early Halloween prank, he said, "Halloween? No, it was too clean. There had to

be some purpose behind it."

Despite the setback, Mr. Nemanishen has no doubts the earth moving at the bridge site will be done on schedule, tentatively set for completion in mid-summer of 1984.



TEMPORARY REPAIRS — Temporary repairs were made on this large tire, and 43 others, after they were punctured in a vandalism incident at the new Borden Bridge construction site early Sunday. The \$150,000 worth of tires will have to be replaced but the air leaks were stopped for now by bolts like the one to the left of the hand in the photo.