

TC 18 Dec 97 pg A3 3330 Beach

Oak Bay renovator digs himself into hole

By Ian Dutton
Times Colonist staff

An Oak Bay man thinks the province has done him dirt.

Bill Vandermale, who is renovating a house on The Esplanade in Oak Bay, has been told he can't do some of the work needed to complete the renovations because his yard may be an archeological site.

Before digging to install sewer and water lines, Vandermale must have the tailings from the building site examined for possible artifacts — and he must pay for the archeological team doing the work.

"I cannot dig any ditches to hook up my water and my storm sewer; I'm not allowed to bring in any soil or fill to get

my sidewalks in, I cannot get into the garage on account of it."

Vandermale says he has no problem with the inspection — it's the \$6,550 bill he objects to.

"I have no difficulty for them to go through it, but I do have to take the bill and I object to that — strongly."

He said he took out a building permit with the municipality, and there was no indication there might be a difficulty with the site.

He said that part of the problem is that the municipalities don't know where the potential trouble sites are.

"[Municipalities] are asking for a zone where this might occur," Vandermale said.

"[The Ministry] is saying, 'Well that's

secret, because if they give it out, then people will start digging into everybody's yard."

Vandermale said he is facing a Jan. 16 deadline to have work completed so he can get an occupancy permit. Otherwise he'll have to move to a hotel, and store his furniture.

He said a couple of archeologists taking a Sunday stroll past the building site determined it might be an archeological hot spot.

"They saw that pile and announced to the archeological department who phoned me and they told me I had to stop right there and then, to let them take a look at it."

Archeologist Grant Keddie, who works at the Royal B.C. Museum, said

the Willows Beach area is widely known as an archeological site.

An excavation at the southern end of the beach several years ago found artifacts dating back 2,700 years.

Excavations toward the north end, closer to Vandermale's property, have found artifacts as old as 1,700 years.

The bay areas in Victoria are almost all archeological sites, he said. "Most of the sites have houses on them. At Willows Beach, the site is all underneath the road and houses."

As for the complaint about a home builder having to pay, Keddie said it's common sense that the person destroying the site should be the one to pay for it.

— With files from Kim Westad