

**Edmonton's Other Voice**

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It's democracy Ron

Wonderful things, bandwagons.

People, particularly politicians and the media, are forever jumping on and off the darn things. We do it too — when it's in a good cause.

In fact, today we are going to put our shoulder to a bandwagon we set in motion some weeks ago. We suggested that if Premier Lougheed wanted to do something for hard-pressed homeowners and the battered construction industry he could institute a Saskatchewan-style mortgage relief program. After all, there's an election coming up (in the fall or in the spring, whichever you like) and mortgage relief could be the Locet missile in the provincial Tories' election arsenal.

After we suggested it, everybody and his dog began calling for just such a program from the Lougheed government. Television picked it up, and so did that other paper. Good, the more the merrier.

Now it seems the premier's staff — in particular his testy news secretary Ron Liepert — are a little upset with the media for encouraging people to call the premier's office to say they are in favor of a mortgage relief program. They don't think it will do much good. They point out that any decision on a mortgage program would have to be made by the entire Tory caucus.

No doubt that the question would go before the caucus, but there is also no doubt that when folks are upset and determined to get action they want to phone the main man — numero uno.

For a lot of people Peter Lougheed is the embodiment of our new Alberta — whether Ron Liepert likes it or not. It was Peter Lougheed who took the province by the scruff of the neck and encouraged it to become the economic powerhouse of the continent. (Not to mention taking a lacklustre Alberta Tory Party and turning it into a government.)

Why shouldn't people turn to Peter Lougheed when mortgage rates are about to smash their dreams of the good life into rubble? It's a sad fact, but the Tories' overwhelming election victories have not brought them a full slate of aggressive, caring MLAs. Some people would much rather call the premier than call their MLA. Ask the folks in St. Paul. They're not even sure where their MLA is hanging up his hat these days.

If Albertans think it's a good idea that the government should dig into the \$11 billion Heritage Savings Trust Fund and come up with a mortgage relief program which will help people hold on to their homes and weather this Ottawa-provoked economic crisis — then they have every right to call 427-2251 and leave that message for Premier Lougheed.

We can't believe that would bother Peter Lougheed. If it bothers Ron Liepert — tough! Welcome to democracy Mr. Liepert.

Dial-a-premier scheme ridiculous, says press aide

By PAUL DE GROOT

Phone calls are beginning to pour into government offices urging some form of mortgage assistance.

Calls to Premier Peter Lougheed, for instance, have picked up sharply since his office telephone number (427-2251) was broadcast on television Tuesday.

"We've received numerous calls, but I'm not going to give you the number," Jane Simmons, the premier's assistant press secretary, said Thursday.

Premier Lougheed's press secretary, Ron Liepert, said phoning the premier about a mortgage assistance plan is "ridiculous." He added the current spate of calls on mortgage assistance is not a

true indication of how strongly people feel, since "people will call any number if you put it on television."

The decision to introduce such a plan will not be made by the premier, but by the Conservative caucus, which includes all 73 Tory MLAs, Mr. Liepert said. If people want to influence the government, they should call their MLA, he said.

Provincial Treasurer Lou Hyndman's office said they had received a few calls, and expected more this morning. Journal columnist Don Braid published Mr. Hyndman's office number (427-8809) Thursday, but by the time most people read the paper Thursday evening, the office would have been closed.

LETTER OF THE DAY

IT APPALLS me to read an editorial in the July 26 edition of the Edmonton Sun entitled "It's democracy Ron." The editorial implied that I had suggested it was ridiculous for people to phone the premier's office regarding mortgage relief. Not only was the editorial incorrect, but the story (in the competing newspaper I might add) on which it was based was also incorrect. What I, in fact, did say was that it would be ridiculous for a reporter to assume that a govern-

ment program would be based solely on a phone-in campaign without the input of MLAs. The premier's office is receptive to phone calls and letters on any subject. Contrary to your editorial, that does not bother me. What does disturb me, however, is an editorial based on incorrect facts published by the competition.

Ron Liepert
Press secretary
Office of the premier
(Thanks for your letter)