

# YOU SAID IT BEST

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Calgary Herald Archive

Reader wonders if MLAs were dozing off in their marathon session.

## Were they asleep at the switch?

**MLAS •** Re: "Legislature session hits 22-hour record," Dec. 6.

A record 22-hour session in the Alberta legislature, ramming through more than a

dozen bills isn't something I would want to add to list of bragging rights.

It's a medical fact that lack of sleep impairs one's judgment. Sitting continuously from

8 p.m. Tuesday until 6 p.m. Wednesday — how long were they awake before that?

Ray Fowler, Calgary



Sunday » December  
16 » 2007

## Legislature session hits 22-hour record

### Several bills passed in all-nighter

**Archie McLean and Jason Markusoff**

For The Calgary Herald

*Thursday, December 06, 2007*

The fall sitting of Alberta's legislature wrapped up Wednesday after a record long day in which the government rammed through more than a dozen bills.

Everything from "speed on green" photo radar, the new lobbyist registry, a pair of contentious health bills and Bill 46 passed during the gruelling final push.

The house sat continuously from 8 p.m. on Tuesday until almost 6 p.m. on Wednesday -- the longest stretch in Alberta history.

"I'm alive, but I'm glad it's done," Municipal Affairs Minister Ray Danyluk said as bleary-eyed MLAs filed out of the house.

Tory insiders say Premier Ed Stelmach wants to call an election in early February, making this week the last time he can enact his ambitious legislative agenda before facing voters for the first time as premier.

The all-night sitting provoked some unusual behaviour. It's normally deemed unparliamentary for an MLA to put his feet up on somebody else's legislature chair. But when it's 9 a.m. Wednesday and the assembly has been debating since the previous day, such manners are generally excused.

Richard Magnus was the Calgary Conservative MLA in the government's back row, feet up, eyes closed, mouth open, seemingly oblivious to the Liberal hectoring and Tory heckling about this bizarre marathon of democracy.

Around 3 a.m., MLAs passed the widely opposed Bill 46, which will split the Energy and Utilities Board into two agencies and reshape the rules for public hearings. It has drawn scorn from utilities companies, consumer advocates, municipalities, environmentalists and especially rural landowners, including opponents of a proposed Edmonton-to-Calgary power line who were spied on this year by EUB-hired private detectives.

The Liberals and NDP tried several tactics to delay Bill 46, but the Tories closed down debate, since the government plans to create the two new regulators in time for Jan. 1.

Among the other bills passed was one that will force some mental-health patients to receive treatment, as well as one doctors' groups warn will let the health minister interfere with their own policies.

All-night sittings are rare at the legislature, but they do happen. In the spring, the Liberals and NDP provoked one such sitting over rent controls. The second longest debate took place in May of 2001, when the Tory-dominated legislature, eager to start summer break, passed a dozen bills in a record 21 1/2-hour session.

As in the past, Tories accused opposition members of needlessly prolonging the debates, an accusation that irked Laurie Blakeman, the Liberal house leader.

Blakeman quipped that one cabinet minister's snore would make him a perfect bass in a choir -- awake or asleep -- and marvelled at her own ability to stay awake all night.

Tory MLAs were less apt to joke.

"They were arguing all night long that they need more time to argue the bills," grumbled Edmonton Tory MLA Thomas Lukaszuk, who had been there since 11:30 p.m.

Conservative House Leader Dave Hancock said he was pleased with the government's performance in the session. When asked what he would do next, he gave the obvious answer -- "I'm going to go have a sleep."

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