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Excerpt from Glen McGregor's Column *Highway 308: Notes From the Election Road*

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AND BUSINESS IS GOOD

The Tories referenced a longtime Liberal when they based their commitment to reducing patient wait times for health services on a 2004 report co-authored by Senator Michael Kirby. Using the work of a longtime Liberal to nail in a policy plank seems shrewd, but if the Tories were looking for a figurehead to illustrate their commitment to the public system, they could have done better.

In addition to his Senate duties, Mr. Kirby manages to squeeze in time as a board member and shareholder in the private health care company Extendicare Inc., which operates nursing homes and provides home-care services.

If there are any doubts about Extendicare's position on the private/public quandary, one need only read the company's trademarked slogan for clarification: "Health Care is Our Business."

According to insider-transaction disclosures Mr. Kirby filed with security regulators, he held 22,500 shares in the company as of March, which at today's stock prices would be worth about \$414,000. He also listed options on another 58,000 shares with a gross value of more than \$1 million.

Some public health-care advocates have accused Mr. Kirby of having a conflict-of-interest between his study of the health care system for the Senate and his work with Extendicare. He has denied any conflict and notes that former ethics commissioner Howard Wilson also came to the same conclusion after looking into the issue in 2001.

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