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Those who live in glass houses

By BRIAN LOCKHART

You've all heard the saying about throwing stones when you're living in a glass house.

That's solid advice for just about everyone.

It goes double, maybe triple for politicians. If you're going to publicly criticize your opponent, you'd better make sure the skeletons in your closet aren't ready to come back in some kind of zombie apocalypse with video tape, letters, or emails, where you practised the same behaviour you now condemn your opponent for.

For the most part, what's in the past should stay in the past. Especially the distant past. You can't change it so why bring it up?

You may be embarrassed about things you did 20 or even 30 years ago. Do you remember ever leaving a party or some out of the way tavern, knowing full well you shouldn't be behind the wheel, but thinking at the time you'll be okay to drive because it's not that far?

Most likely you wouldn't think of trying the same stunt these days, but would you really want someone to suddenly bring it up at your next family reunion?

?Hey, Bob, remember that time we got hammered at Groggy's Tavern out on Line 6, and you almost hit that tree? That was quite a night!?

Politicians are human beings and I'm quite sure most of them had incidents in the past they would rather forget, or least prefer they weren't a part of.

For the most part, the media in generally seems to understand this. Rarely do you see the media dig up some minor incident from a guy's distance past to use it against them. And if they did, that really would dirty pool.

Do you really care if a politician got drunk at a fraternity party when he was 19 years old and fell through the skylight of a hotel and landed on the pool table during a Shriner's convention? I guess that could have happened, or something similar, but are you going to hang that over a guy's head for the rest of his life?

Of course erasing the past excludes certain undeniably inappropriate behaviours the public should know about.

Embezzlement charges, credit card fraud, involvement in a Ponzi scheme, multiple charges of assault ? now those might be something the public should worry about. However, with the political vetting process, a person like that would never even get to run for office.

Recently, Liberal Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale tweeted out a short video recorded in 2005 of Conservative leader Andrew Scheer speaking out against same-sex marriage.

He didn't condemn or even criticize the gay community, however he said he believed marriage should be between a man and a woman.

It was a real ?gotcha' moment ? by the Liberals in an election year, to bring up something that happened 14 years earlier, by catching the leader of their opposing party saying something that goes against a popular opinion of today.

Oh, wait a minute, let's take another look at 2005 and the gay marriage debate.

At the time, 32 Liberal politicians, some of whom are still in caucus, voted against gay marriage. Then looking back even further, Goodale himself, in 1999, voted against a motion to recognize same sex marriage.

Yup, it's the pot calling the kettle black. I guess Goodale must now be required to stand up in parliament and apologize to the nation and the gay community for his personal attack by voting ?no' when he could have voted ?yes.'

Should they now release the names of all the Liberal members who voted ?no' as well so they can be publicly shamed?

Those names could easily be found with a little research.

If the Liberals want to play by these standards, maybe fighting fire with fire is the best route for the other parties.

However, do they really want to get in some dirty little fight where they are digging up witnesses who saw events from 20 years ago? If so, most of the politician on Parliament Hill should be a little nervous.

Yes, it's an election year, so politicians want to get an advantage over their opponents. However maybe they should try being honorable and promote themselves and the qualities they have as well as the party ideas rather than attacking others.

After all, those glass houses can be shattered rather quickly when you're the first one to start throwing stones.