Elevators: Vertical Transportation Infrastructure

With the need for more energy efficiency in business and housing and to limit urban sprawl, which is both expensive and energy inefficient, it is inevitable and essential that we continue filling the downtown core of major cities like Toronto with very tall buildings.

Reliable elevators are essential to this vertical expansion and should be regulated as part of an essential transportation infrastructure; similar to how roads, railroads and air travel are regulated.

The problem is compounded as both newer and older buildings have frequent elevator breakdowns.

The breakdowns themselves would not be that much of a issue if not for the protracted repair times that seem to be the result of elevators being built with proprietary parts (especially the electronic circuit boards), that aren't readily available.

Possible Legislative and Regulatory Solutions:

1. Elevator shafts should be regulated as “vertical transportation corridors”, designated an essential part of the transportation infrastructure.

2. The elevators themselves would still be privately owned (like airplanes) to avoid demands for unrestricted public access to a building's private elevators.

3. Elevator electronics need to be modular, waterproof, interchangeable and always in stock. (There's no reason for new elevators to have circuit board technology from the 1970s.) Any retrofit or rebuild could mandate the new standard for electronics.

4. Until legislative requirements for standardized elevator design can be enacted, there should be a requirement that spare parts be available and always in stock at the elevator repair company sites.

This is more than a problem of inconvenience. This is a significant safety concern.