

I can see them now, two elevator contractors with one little thing left to do before packing up their tools on a Friday afternoon.

Excitedly talking about indulging in a cold beverage after work, one nonchalantly chooses a location to drill the hole while the other holds a cigarette loosely in his mouth. Squinting from the smoke he holds the hardware in place while his companion fastens it to the wall. Dusting their hands off and adjusting their pants they pick up their toolboxes and head home... a job well done.

For most people, pushing that newly installed elevator button is as easy as throwing your shoes on. For me, another time consuming process was added to my day whereby I have to wait for somebody who won't ignore my request for assistance to press the button, because it was installed in a hard-to-reach place.

It may seem like the right moment to break out the world's smallest violin and in many situations there isn't much else to do. When it comes to mobility and accessibility issues however I tend to want to break out the bagpipes! Toronto has done a great job making transit more accessible for wheelchair users and all new public buildings are deemed wheelchair accessible, but I've found is that my life is no longer spontaneous.

Let me begin with Toronto's Mobility Transit system. I have to start calling at 7 a.m. a full day ahead to increase the chances of getting the pick up and drop off times I want. Wait much past 7 and I am usually put on a waiting list with hopes that somebody will cancel their ride, which has never happened to me yet!

If I get the time I want I am given a half-hour pick up window. If the bus arrives

Luke Soup

by Luke Anderson



within the window, which is rare, and I am not at the curb, the drivers will not wait more than five minutes. And forget late-night pickups, the last run is at 12:30. The upside of Mobility Transit is that I can go pretty much anywhere in the city for \$2.25, and it will take me to areas not accessible by subway.

What happens if I miss my pick up, it's 12:35 a.m. and I'm far from home? The answer is, start wheeling buddy! Accessible taxis stop running at 12:30 and even if I called and got the dispatcher the reaction would be, "Sorry you have to book one day ahead of time... start wheeling my friend!"

Back to elevators. Not long ago my Mom, Dad, sister Logan and I decided to go for a tour of the neighbourhood. We boarded the elevator but halfway down something happened which to my dad and I amounted to little more than a waste of time, and to my Mom and sister a panic-inducing situation. The elevator stopped, lights out and all.

Luckily, within two minutes the lights came on and we were delivered safely to the ground floor. It wasn't until 20 minutes later, when we talked to a store owner outside his darkened shop that we learned the power was out. We continued walking, cautiously negotiated intersections, some controlled by ordinary citizens.

Convenience stores were persuading pedestrians to buy frozen goods before they turned to liquid. Some businesses simply posted signs saying they had quit for the day and licensed restaurants with patios were bustling with people taking advantage of the situation, downing the last of the city's cold beverages.

The four of us continued walking, and only then did I realize that a power outage may not be much fun for somebody in my shoes or more appropriately, my "power" wheelchair. We headed back towards my apartment. It was rush hour and the street looked like an ant farm. People huffing and puffing in their business attire in the sweltering heat, high-heeled shoes being removed and cellphones switched on.

We made it back to my stuffy apartment, anxious to know when this fiasco would be over. It was late Thursday evening when I said goodbye to my family from my candlelit apartment -- little did I know I would have to conserve energy on my power chair until Sunday morning...

I awoke Friday to normal traffic sounds and assumed that I would be greeted by my attendant bearing good news, but no. By Friday afternoon I had plowed through a book and was encouraged by rumours of the power coming back on that night.

Darkness fell, and as on the previous night Torontonians could actually see the

stars. People roamed the streets like worm pickers, wielding flashlights and looking for a way to escape their dark, overheated apartments. The backup power in my telephone had drained, communication breakdown!

Saturday morning, still no power and I started to get stir crazy. Making meals was a challenge because by Saturday night everything in the freezer had thawed and the fridge was developing an interesting smell. I learned that all the power in the city had been restored except three or four buildings on my street. I kind of hit the wall on Saturday night when I returned from a short wheel around the block, with my chair running on fumes.

I pressed the elevator button, which had been powered by a generator since Thursday afternoon and nothing happened. As tears threatened I was told the elevator had overheated and the repair person would not be available to fix it until midnight... it was 7 p.m.

With limited power left in my wheelchair battery I started to round up some people from the building to join my "lift Luke up the stairs" team. Luckily the team was never put into action and the elevator repair man worked his magic!

Exhausted, I fell asleep and dreamt of bright lights, glowing baseball stadiums, spinning hydro-metres and getting shocked touching an electric fence... Sunday morning I awoke to my phone ringing and alarm clock blinking the wrong time and I let out a sigh of relief.

I have realized that I am no longer able to gain physical strength climbing mountains; however there is an inner power that gets stronger when circumstances that are beyond my control need to be negotiated.

NEW LISTING

100' x 100' lot * Rec room completely updated in 2003 * Private backyard * Situated on a quiet dead end street * 2-tier deck off kitchen * "Tour" of this property at www.kirkbnice.com.

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5029 3rd Concession
Goodwood \$399,900

*1.3 acres * Completely updated * Huge 25' x 50' workshop heated * 3+1 bedroom brick bungalow and 2 bathrooms * 2 gas fireplaces * Finished rec room * 5 appliances incl. * Too much to list * "Tour" of this property at www.kirkbnice.com.

"WALK TO THE LAKE"
16 Mitchell Avenue
Musselman's Lake \$189,900

* Completely updated 3 bedroom home + 2 bathrooms * Large 50' x 125' lot * Finished basement * Quiet tucked away street * Walkout from master bedroom onto a large deck * Central air * "Tour" of this property at www.kirkbnice.com.

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 - 12 Summerfield Ave., Stouffville
 - 14745 North Line, Musselman Lake
 - 127 Percy Lane, Stouffville
 - 3 Windsor Dr., Musselman Lake
 - 5885 Lakeshore Rd., Musselman Lake
 - 284 Stouffville St., Stouffville
 - 113 Blue Oak Ave., Uxbridge
 - 103 Baker St., Stouffville
 - 7 Fockler Lane, Stouffville
 - 12439 North Line, Musselman Lake
 - 19 Montreal St., Stouffville
 - 28 Windsor Dr., Musselman Lake
 - 66 George St., Stouffville
 - 13645 North Line, Musselman Lake
 - 6 Summerfield Ave., Stouffville
 - 102 Baker St., Stouffville
 - 284 Stouffville St., Stouffville
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 - 58 Blue Oak, Uxbridge

GREAT FAMILY HOME
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Amazing home with many features!

Country kitchen features new laminate flooring, 3 bdms., hardwood flrs. in LR, fin. loft fam. rm. (could be a 4th bdrm.), fin. rec. rm., tons of storage, enclosed breezeway w/glass door to fully fenced bkyd makes a great sunroom or playroom for the kids on a rainy day! large kid friendly yard w/tree fort, tire swing & sandbox & still room for a large veggie garden! Professionally landscaped w/interlock & an assortment of perennials & water garden. Garage fully insulated w/hydro, ideal for handyman/hobbyist. Steps to community centre, park, ball diamonds, school & GO bus.

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Unique 30 acres, 10 acre spring fed pond with bridge to small island. Some landscaping done. Driveway & hydro in. Great private estate or recreational property. Several attractive building sites. Secluded but not isolated. Lots of wildlife.

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