

**Testimony of
Javier Lojan, Acting Commissioner
New York City Department of Sanitation**

**Hearing before the New York City Council
Committee on Sanitation & Solid Waste Management
Wednesday, January 22, 2025 10:00 A.M.**

Oversight Hearing: DSNY's Snow Preparedness Plans for the 2025 Winter Season

Good morning Chair Abreu and members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. I am Javier Lojan, Acting Commissioner of the New York City Department of Sanitation, and I am joined today by Joseph Antonelli, Deputy Commissioner, Management and Budget, by Joshua Goodman, Deputy Commissioner, Public Affairs & Customer Experience, and by Reginald Timothee, Assistant Commissioner, Support Services.

We have already fought five snow events this winter, using tens of millions of pounds of salt and hundreds of thousands of gallons of brine to make sure that streets and bike lanes are safe and passable. Just this past weekend, thousands of Sanitation Workers labored on 12-hour shifts, driving 2500 plows and 700 salt spreaders on 19,000 lane-miles of New York City roadway to make sure that New Yorkers saw as little interruption to their lives as possible despite several inches of snow falling in some neighborhoods over a period of just a few hours.

We plan all year long for this, revising routes, evaluating performance, and overhauling equipment. We know the playbook. But that doesn't mean we rest on our laurels or that snow fighting isn't subject to the same kind of innovative changes – the Trash Revolutionary spirit – that has characterized our cleaning, collection, and sustainability efforts over the first several years of the Adams administration.

Far from it. This is my 26th winter with the Strongest, and I am proud to report that thanks to historic investments in both tried and true best practices and a commitment to embracing new operational paradigms and technology, we are more prepared for winter than ever before.

The same Sanitation Workers who collect trash are the people who drive plows and salt spreaders, and historically, this has meant frequent collection delays during winter weather operations. Today, we have a uniformed headcount and a fleet allotment that allows DSNY to staff a full salt spreader operation while still keeping core collection functions on schedule. Obviously in a major storm, snow will still need to come first, but to be perfectly frank, the level of service parity is something that I as a young Sanitation Worker a quarter century ago would have considered impossible. Mayor Adams got it done.

And we are holding ourselves accountable. The Department is now using a state of the art tracking and management system for snow operations, known as BladeRunner 2.0. This gives us real-time insight into both salting and plowing operations in every corner of the City, allowing us to dispatch resources as needed.

Taken together, higher headcount and better internal monitoring are the primary factors behind one of the most exciting winter developments to hit the City since the Rockettes: what we call Snow Equity.

If you grew up here, you likely remember the old days of “primary, secondary, and tertiary” streets. That kind of division in service level is over. Snow equity means that every street is on a route, and every route can be dispatched at the same time for snow operations as soon as conditions warrant it.

And it means servicing car lanes and bike lanes at the same time, so that New Yorkers who use bicycles to get to work or to do their work can continue to do so safely, even as we open car lanes for emergency vehicles and others.

This is all outlined in the Department’s Borough-based snow plans, submitted to the City Council at the end of September pursuant to Local Law 28 of 2011. As I mentioned earlier, we have over 700 Salt Spreaders, 2500 plows, 47 bike lane vehicles, a fleet of brine trucks, and enough salt to turn this City into the world’s largest plate of french fries.

That said, we are closely watching and managing the work required to maintain our snow-fighting fleet. While vehicle maintenance staffing is broadly in line with historical averages, the number of pieces of specialized snow-fighting equipment requiring maintenance has grown substantially. The team we have at our Central Repair Shop in Queens, at our Borough Repair Shops across the City, and at every single DSNY garage is working around the clock and has done a fantastic job during recent snow events. Of 175 vehicles requiring service during a recent snowfall, 166 were repaired and returned to service before the end of the weather event. This achievement underscores the resilience and commitment of our staff, even as new challenges emerge.

To ensure that our fleet is always ready for whatever weather comes our way, we have recently onboarded seven new auto mechanics, two new automotive service workers, and six auto service temps. We are also approved to move forward with filling 12 additional related vacancies, and intend to do so immediately.

Additional snow may or may not come this year. But we are ready. Every Sanitation Worker is trained, and with multiple events under our belts, they are tested.

Working with the NYPD, DOT, the MTA, Parks, DEP, and NYCEM, the Strongest are prepared to give New Yorkers the safe and easy snow days they deserve.

Proposed Legislation

I will now turn to the bills on today’s agenda.

Intro 355, sponsored by Council Member Nurse, would require DSNY to post emergency and resiliency plans on a dedicated webpage. Our snow plans are already available at nyc.gov/snow,

and we believe that a separate DSNY emergency and resiliency page would dilute critical messaging coming from New York City Emergency Management. As such, we oppose this bill.

Intro 534, sponsored by Council Member Brannan, increases penalties on certain but not all businesses for failure to remove snow, ice, and dirt from sidewalks. This raises an important point: while DSNY clears snow and ice from roadways and bike lanes, pedestrian infrastructure is the responsibility of the property owner, and DSNY is prepared to enforce these rules to ensure that residents can get where they need to go. We wrote 4,000 summonses for this in a single storm last year. We have concerns about the narrow focus on chain businesses in this bill, as opposed to all properties, and with the ambiguity of the fine structure as proposed. That said, we would be happy to work with Council Member Brannan on next steps.

Thank you, and we look forward to taking your questions.