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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** November 16, 2018  
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**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO HOLDS MEDIA AVAILABILITY ON SNOW  
STORM RESPONSE**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** ...I'm frustrated too. I'm frustrated as a New Yorker who was stuck in traffic, like so many other people were. I'm frustrated as the Mayor of this city that for so many reasons people didn't get what they should have had last night. Look, again, I have found a long time ago New Yorkers like straightforward explanations. They don't like to be toyed around with. In truth, this was a kind of perfect storm. It emerged bigger and later than anyone expected, obviously affected the whole tristate area in a very severe way. We had exceptional dynamics like the 20-car pileup on the George Washington Bridge, knocking out the outbound lanes of the George Washington Bridge – something I can't remember ever happening before. We had the early time of year and the impact on the trees – and an extraordinary number of trees falling, something that hasn't typically happened in a lot of our storms. But all of that gets back to a core reality, which is the timing.

So, we went into Wednesday night with estimates from the National Weather Service in the one-two inches of snow range. That's not a snowstorm that any of us would be afraid of. That's not a snowstorm where we're going to use all of the emergency measures and tell people don't go to work, and stay off the roads. We've had – I remind you, a lot of us have been through this together – The biggest snowstorm in New York City history – 28 inches, 29, whatever it was in the final analysis. There are times where we need to tell people, don't even think about going to work, clear the roads, leave room for Sanitation. Wednesday night, we had no indication of that. Thursday morning, we had no indication of that. I said earlier, I referred to what has typically been the 11 am National Weather Service report. It turns out that the timing yesterday was later even than usual in terms of when we got the report – it was 12:36, yesterday. It was the first indication of three-to-five inches of snow. And again, normally, three-to-five inches of snow would not have posed this kind of problem.

It ended up coming exactly at the wrong time. It basically concentrated as the rush hour was beginning – heavy wet snow – heavier, faster than anyone expected. So, there are a lot of reasons why things ended up the way they did. But that said, we are trying to learn some lessons and figure out what we can do better.

So, the first thing we're going to do is there will be a full audit review of everything that happened with the City agencies. We're also going to sit with our State partners because everyone is connected here – MTA, Port Authority, everyone – we all have to work it through

together. Deputy Mayor Fuleihan's timing is impeccable – his team at the Office of Operations will lead that review. I think we're going to find that a lot of this was exceptional and unusual and some of it beyond our control, but we're also going to find areas where we can do better. The central concern I have is that we have as a City done well when we can get information out to people early and in a clear way. We don't do as well when we don't get information to folks. This one is tough because the information broke so late and I do think, in retrospect, we could have tried to say at 1 pm, let's say, we're headed for a much bigger situation, go home immediately, you know, leave work early. That might have helped. I think unfortunately to some extent the die was cast at that point – people had already brought their cars into the City. It might have had a helpful effect, but I'm not sure it would have averted the essence of what we went through.

So, we want to do that review because we need to do better, but we also understand the essence of all of this is having good information on a timely basis, and unfortunately that just was not the case yesterday.

At this moment, after a very difficult time yesterday, and I'll say, I know everyone's feeling – among the agencies here – we're all unhappy with what happened, but I also want to say people worked very, very hard to try and address the situation that was exceedingly difficult. The agencies, I want to give particular thanks to the NYPD and the FDNY who spent the whole night trying to undo traffic jams and get trees out of roads under very adverse circumstances. I know Sanitation was trying to do all they could do, and a lot of times the core problem was they could not get to their locations because of the traffic. They needed to go back for salt and there was no way to get back to their resupply. So, people worked very hard, very intensely.

I want to say, as we got into the morning and finally Sanitation had the ability to get out into roads that were not clogged by traffic – I think they did a good job on the overnight, clearing up as much as possible and making things move better this morning. We still had some issues early in the morning in the Bronx. But, you know, in the final analysis, under very, very adverse circumstances, I want to just say, I think a lot of City agencies did everything they could do. But the essence of this, even if you say it's, you know, an exceedingly unusual set of events that came together, we still can't let it happen again and we have to learn from it, we have to drill for it. It was – in the final analysis, just over six inches of snow. That should not be able to have this impact on this city and we have to figure out a way in the future to make sure that that does not happen again.

Very quickly in Spanish –

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, I want to just say procedurally – take questions on the storm, then I'm going to talk about DOI. We'll take some questions on that and then maybe some other questions as well.

**Question:** Mayor, can you explain – and correct me if these numbers are incorrect – but I understand about a third of the plows [inaudible] available were –

**Mayor:** A third of the plows?

**Question:** Plows – went out and about last night – and I think the question a lot of people have, it's our understanding that, yes, salting did happen as soon as we saw snowflakes, but why in the world were only a third of the plows – if that number's correct – were used last night?

**Mayor:** Can I stop you one second? Going to Kathryn – you're going to talk about the numbers – but I want you to start everyone again, because it's a whole new winter, with the thing that took me a while to fully understand – that when plows can actually start plowing, because I think most New Yorkers need to hear that.

**Commissioner Kathryn Garcia, Department of Sanitation:** Absolutely – is this on? So, yesterday, into the morning – we make our plans the day before because obviously we need to call people in – we were planning for a one-inch event, which is going to be primarily our salt spreaders. We did add plows to that in the late morning when we started to get that rumblings that maybe something else would happen. At that point in time, our staffing going into the afternoon, was allowing us to up to about 700 plows. We can – when we get very, very big, our biggest number for a blizzard would be about 1,600. So, there were points in time when we were between about 350 and 700 on the plowing side, depending on how many staff we had in, because we were in three shifts, we were not split.

**Question:** You couldn't have called them up?

**Commissioner Garcia:** They already all had been working that day. So, everybody did work that day, but some had worked midnight to eight on the overnight before, some were working six to six, and some were working, starting at 4 o'clock. All of them worked overtime but we were in a three unevenly split shifts.

**Mayor:** I just want to amplify this. So, imagine you're in Kathryn's shoes and you're hearing one inch, two inches, and that's salt only – or salt essentially. And then suddenly, you know, literally, it's afternoon when you hear for the first time this thing has suddenly jumped up. Now, I will say, one of the things we're going to work on – and this is not a diss on the National Weather Service, they do extraordinary work – but, you know, we have been burned a few times, not because they're not trying but because weather's unpredictable. I think we're going to start being even more conservative. But even if you said, let's throw on a few more inches, as Kathryn said, our biggest – you know, when you have a blizzard, 20 inches, 25 inches, 28 inches – like, that's when it's all hands on deck. When it's two inches, three inches, four inches, you couldn't imagine something like this possibly becoming what happened yesterday. Nonetheless, we have to figure out how to make the right adjustments.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, where exactly were you when you realized this is far more than our expectations, and then what can you do, or what should you have done to better prepare? I mean, what could have gotten you out of this?

**Mayor:** Again, that's why I try to give you an extensive straightforward opening, that I think there were some limits about what we could do honestly. And again, my job is to offer New Yorkers straight-talk, not platitudes. If the fuller facts became available after 12:30 and rush hour began – rush hour officially begins at 3:30-4 o'clock – we were already in a really bad situation. Now, that said –

**Question:** Is that when you realized –

**Mayor:** No, no – I will say, personally, I had heard that the number went up, but per se, going up to three-to-five inches was not going to be a major weather event. We go through three-to-five inch storms all of the time. It was my own personal experience – left Gracie Mansion for an event at 6:30 and a few blocks into it, suddenly there's this crazy traffic on the FDR and there's no other place to turn. Something obviously was unusual and we all started – I started calling everyone and people started calling each other from their own experiences. But I think it's really important to note, the thing that I think we would have had a shot at is with the right messaging, very, very quickly, we might have been able to get some people off the road and have a better chance of clearing it. The problem is, even hearing three-to-five inches would not have set off a sense of alarm. You couldn't have imagined what we saw. If I just said to you, we're going to have three-to-five inches of snow, you wouldn't in a million years have pictured what ended up really happening. We've had much worse snow and never had something like that. So, this is a tough learning experience because we got something we never would have been able to predict from those numbers.

**Question:** There was no way to pivot?

**Mayor:** I think the reason we have to do a review is, I'm sure there were some ways to pivot, but I'm trying to be honest with you, I think in essence the die was cast. Could we have gotten better information out, I think so. Could we have made some tactical moves that improved the situation, I think so. Could we have changed the basics? Not that late is my fear.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, what happened with your commute yesterday? Did you turn around? Did you keep going?

**Mayor:** When I said at 6:30 pm. No, I kept going, but it was ridiculous.

**Question:** When did you get to where you were – where were you going?

**Mayor:** It took another – I was going down to Gramercy Tavern for an event for Computer Science for All. It took like 20-25 more minutes than it normally would. And then going back to Gracie was another 30-40 minutes than it normally would have been something like that.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, at CBS we have been innovative with social media posts of people who are incredibly critical of the job that you did during the snow storm. They say you were unprepared, that you should step aside. Your reactions to the those emails –

**Mayor:** Marcia, Marcia I am not going to dignify that question. You've been around a long time I am kind of surprised of you for asking a question like that. The – this City and this Sanitation Department have handled a series of major snowstorms with tremendous professionalism and effectiveness. I can't tell you how many New Yorkers after the last big storms acknowledged all the progress the Sanitation Department has made on vast huge storms. This was a real unusual series of events. I am not happy about it, we're going to do a full review, we're going to find ways to make it better. But I am trying to be honest with people. I am not going to give people an answer that says oh we had perfect knowledge and we could have come up with a perfect

solution. Sometimes you get the knowledge you need too late to have a perfect solution. I think real people understand that.

**Question:** So you're basically telling people that you got the information too late, that the [inaudible] and there was little that you could do at that point. Could you have said to people, listen shelter in place, don't get on the roads until after we clear –

**Mayor:** If we had understood that three-to-five inches could result in this kind of impact and I'll again, all the experts speak to it and Polly as well. If you said to me, typical day in New York City in winter three-to-five inches of snow, that's not a major snow event. I think if we had been able to understand some of the dominos that were falling at some point we could have gotten out there with a much stronger saying stop everything, retreat, don't get on the roads and all. But I am not sure it would have been in time. Even the information that we had gone from 1-2 inches to three-to-five inches – again, I want to, I am going to treat everyone here with respect and honor everyone's intelligence. If we've all experienced 28 inches, you'll understand why three-to-five inches doesn't put us in the state of fear. But at least we saw something was moving. I think in retrospect there may have been ways to say to people beware. The things that really would have been good honestly is we had the information the night before and we told people don't go to work. That would have been the real difference maker. But what do you want to say to it.

**Commissioner Garcia:** No, I mean, absolutely this was an incredibly difficult storm in terms of the fact that I think no one really knew that it was going to change so quickly and it hit at a very, very challenging time right at rush hour and was coming down at two inches an hour. So it was at blizzard strength right at the moment when it was hitting, and it was difficult across all five boroughs. But the difference was we did keep moving in the other boroughs slowly, very slowly and it made it possible for us to by the late evening be basically through Staten Island and Brooklyn and Queens. The GWB sort of clash – the crash that occurred – we ended up having much of our equipment on the Henry Hudson, the FDR, the Bruckner, the Cross Bronx, the Sheraton, the Major Deegan, and it meant that we couldn't move, and if we can't move, we can't work. It really did take actually partnering with PD to actually do escorts and bring us the wrong way up onto some highways to be able to get up there and assist. When we borough in additional equipment in the overnight hours into the Bronx we had to bring it sort of from the Eastern Side of Queens, because the tri-borough was still very backed up and we didn't want to have any more pieces of equipment trapped. So it was going to be a very big storm but I think the accident that occurred on the roads made it very difficult to recover from.

**Question:** So you think the Port Authority should have done a better job with the GWB?

**Commissioner Garcia:** I am – I am.

**Question:** They should have done a better job at clearing the roads they were responsible for like the Cross Bronx, and the Deegan, and all the [inaudible]?

**Commissioner Garcia:** I think that everyone was operating under information that we were looking at a once inch storm and also where it was supposed to end by five o'clock with temperature into the 40's. I don't think any of them could have prepared for this storm which was very different in – across the region. So I am sure that we will talk and I know that Commissioner Trottenberg who's already reached out to her counterparts to start thinking about

what are the pieces of information that we could have worked on jointly if there are any. And I mean at a certain point in time I literally couldn't get a spreader out from the FDR for hours and hours and hours.

**Mayor:** Yeah.

**Question:** Earlier today the City Council Speaker Corey Johnson apologized to New Yorkers for what happened in the City's response. Do you feel that you owe New Yorkers an apology?

**Mayor:** I want to say look, I am very frustrated at what happened. I think it was a horrible experience for New Yorkers. I am upset that New Yorkers went through it. I don't think its fair to say that the City agencies could have stopped all of this. This just – I am not going to do that. Because I think that's just to convenient. If people want to blame city agencies on something that they literally could not have stopped I am not going to be a party to that. Am I frustrated? Do I want to make sure this never happens again? Absolutely.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, the decision to keep the school open was basically made on the day that you were [inaudible]. However, we have some reports of children that were stuck on buses till late hours. I am just wondering if there was anything that could have been done to [inaudible] situation for those kids. Some of them we were told were there until midnight. And then today they had to go to school and a lot of the planned field trips were cancelled for today.

**Mayor:** So, I got it. Let me have the Chancellor speak to the specifics. On the big question, so the way we look at schools and the decision to close – we clearly weren't going to close yesterday we went through the whole school day and there was almost no snow until the school day was over. And today as you, sanitation – because of the work overnight the roads mainly were clear and would be no consideration of closing school in that situation . but I think you're absolutely right. Some really unfortunate things happened that we do not want to see ever happen again. And I am – was a public school parent. I never want o see to see public school parents have to go through what they went through last night. It was not a lot of kids thank God. But for anyone who experienced it was absolutely unfair and the Chancellor will speak to what he's learned and what he's going to do about it. But the thing I was to say about all of this is we are going to hone, giving people warnings whenever humanly possible. I think if Wednesday night we said brace yourselves, massive storm. You all would have said its one-to-two inches predicted, why are you crying wolf? So we couldn't have done that. But the second that we have information that starts to cause concern, we're got to figure out the right way to get the right information and that right message out to people. Chancellor?

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** Do both please.

**Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza:** Sure, so I'll do both. So we did have a number of children last night that were on bus routes that were delayed. Some were delayed from one-two hours. There were a good number that were delayed from anywhere from two-five hours. The last student this morning, with the help of NYPD, because the bus was stuck, got home at about 3:00 am. So, it is absolutely not the circumstances we want for our children. But I do want to say this – our first priority is to make sure that children will be safe and yesterday every student got

home safely. We had no incidents of students being injured. So for us we're very grateful for that. We had extraordinary work that was done by our bus drivers yesterday. Bus drivers that sat with children waiting for their parents who were also stuck in the same traffic to come pick up the students. We had students that were coming back from a college visit in Pennsylvania that were stuck, because they couldn't get into the city. We had teachers and administrators and school support personnel that stayed with students. We had teachers and support personnel stay overnight in some of our school. Some of them because they couldn't get home because the roads weren't passible and some of them because they stayed there so late with children that they wanted to make sure that everybody was okay. So this was a cascading event. We don't want that. It was a perfect storm as the Mayor has mentioned. It hit right when those buses started to roll taking kids home.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor –

**Mayor:** Coming around, coming around, hold on.

**Question:** Mayor, last month you appointed Commissioner Garcia to also be a lead czar to the city. Obviously responding to snowstorms is a huge task. Are you concerned at all that having the Commissioner handle to different very important jobs could lead to one or the other, you know, maybe not getting enough attention?

**Mayor:** It's a fair question but that's not what I've seen in any way, shape, or form. First of all, the Commissioner has five years under her belt of responding to every kind of storm including a storm that was five times, literally five times, bigger than this one, and she also has an extraordinary leadership team, there's no question. The Sanitation Department is very, very well run and I know from the constant dialogue yesterday afternoon, evening with the commissioner – she was at the command post focused on addressing this. So good question, but the answer to me is, no, that's not an issue.

**Question:** [Inaudible] know when the City does a great job or when there are no issues during the storm, there's often like a press conference where you congratulate the various agency heads. Who should take responsibility for what happened yesterday? You won't apologize on behalf of the City, you say it's unfair of New Yorkers to be critical of the agencies, who –

**Mayor:** No I did not – hold on, hold on. Come on. I didn't say it's unfair to be critical, I said don't put it all on the agencies as if the agencies created this problem. It's a very complex problem – guys, I understand complexity is not always your friend when you're trying to break down the information to the people, but please – hold on, hold on, hold on – please be serious about the subject matter. Some of this is what we're saying, I mean from the very beginning I was saying we're doing a full review because we want to figure out what happened, what we could do better, and I said upfront, I'm certain there are some things we could do better but we need a review to understand it better. Second, some of this is beyond the control of any city agency, and the information came in very late. So I – when you say give us the individual or the person to blame or give us a nice, clean, easy story, I'm not going to do that because we don't have a clean easy story. Well you are asking who to blame – we don't know, first of all, because we haven't done a review and second of all, it's not about one person or one agency. This is an extraordinary, unusual situation. I don't remember the George Washington Bridge, outbound in

rush hour, being knocked out before, one example. This had a huge cascading effect, no one could have predicted that.

Now, there are some things I think we could have done better but we need to look at those very carefully and give people a clear, honest answer of what we're going to do. Yes?

**Question:** As far as – on topic of the school buses though, some parents complained that they had no idea where their kids were and they reached out to police, 3-1-1, and they had no way of knowing where – that obviously adds another level of terror –

**Mayor:** Absolutely.

**Question:** Is there any way to communicate with the parents –

**Mayor:** No, this is an area that has to be fixed and this is about more than just about this storm. For some reason, our school bus service has always had trouble communicating with parents. It's not acceptable. I have raised this issue for years. As everyone knows, there was leadership change made very forcefully by the chancellor because what we saw there was unacceptable on many levels. But I will give the Chancellor an instruction right now but I know he already is planning to do it. We need anything that's not working with GPS and every conceivable form of communication and then linked back to a center that parents can call and get updated information – we should be able to do that with a government of this ability, we've got to get that done. And that is not just for snowstorms, that is for every day. Yeah?

**Question:** On the issue of lessons learned, given that storms can change, is one lesson that you yourself have that if the forecast is one or two inches it might make sense to urge New Yorkers to not drive into work –

**Mayor:** I –

**Question:** Mayor, just to [inaudible] for the fact the weather changes from this –

**Mayor:** I can't, I mean, I don't think people would take that with a straight face. I think they'd say what on earth are you talking about. I mean people have a living to make. And, look we all love to say, everyone just take mass transit, I understand for a lot of people that's not easy, and a car might be the only realistic option. But if I were to tell – guys it's the – I'm sure later on we might talk about Amazon, it's the same thing, if we had not gotten Amazon all your tough questions would be how did you lose Amazon. So if I had called red alert with one or two inches of snow you had have said, crying wolf – all this.

**Question:** I'm not saying red alert, I'm saying we know this is a one to two, it might be a good idea if you can—

**Mayor:** I don't think anyone would believe that, that's my problem. I think when people have stayed off the roads it's when we have a good alignment of what we do and what you do. So I was struck – one of the times where we said snow emergency, stay off the roads, and we projected it for hours and hours and hours the day before – but everyone in the media was also giving constant reports of how bad it was going to be, and I was stunned at how much people



honored the alert, stayed off the roads, Sanitation was able to do extraordinary things, even with, as I said, four or five times as much snow. So I don't think you can do it with one or two inches, I think you can say, whatever the weather service says, add – you know, just come up with some formula we're going to assume x amount more. But even if that went to three to five inches, it's kind of hard to tell people don't go to work, don't use your car, in only three to five inches of snow.

**Unknown:** We'll take a few more of this—

**Question:** Can we just a very – like, the dominos you mentioned, I mean, we want to be able to explain to readers – I have to write an article giving some idea of what happened, not about who to blame but what happened? Besides the bridge?

**Mayor:** So I want to turn to both Katherine and Polly, but I would say – and Terry had extraordinary experiences trying to respond from a PD level I think you should explain what that was like for you as well and I really want to commend you because you were literally out there trying to move cars yourself with your bare hands, I admire that. But I want to emphasize, I think if you take the bridge out of this equation it's an entirely different discussion. So if you say you want to write the ultimate story of what happened. 20 car pile-up – George Washington Bridge, entirely knocking out the ability of a huge number of commuters to leave New York City for hours, everything starts to cascade down the West Side Highway, down the East Side, the Cross Bronx, like everything. I think that was, and you all are the experts, seems to me from having talked about this all night and all morning with these guys. Number one factor.

**Question:** What caused that if they lead – if the bridge was properly plowed and salted?

**Mayor:** Go ahead, Polly.

**Commissioner Polly Trottenberg, Department of Transportation:** I mean I talked to my counterparts and I certainly want to echo what the Mayor said – I talked to the Port Authority and I think one of the other weather factors that was unforeseen was that the temperature plummeted. You know, this event had been described as something where it was not going to get below freezing and everything was going to melt, it got icy, and not just on the George Washington Bridge, Bayonne Bridge, Cross Bronx, Major Deegan, a bunch of places where cars started sticking and sliding. It produced, and Chief Monahan can talk about this, a cascading number of crashes and incidents which became an enormous amount for everybody to respond to, but the Mayor is right, the George Washington Bridge is one of the largest movers of traffic in the entire United States of America and when it went down it had a ripple effect that was profound and of course ripple effect slowed buses, buses slowed, cars got stuck behind buses, plows couldn't move. There was that cascade.

**Chief Terrance Monahan, NYPD:** And if you look at that cascade and talk about people now trying to get off those expressways because they weren't moving, you can't get over the bridge, people try to find other routes on the side streets, they were slipping, they were sliding. We had 1,915 accidents in a 12 hour period from noon to midnight, that's 1,200 more than in that same 12-hour period last year. So now that accident is preventing anyone from crossing those intersections and it kept going out and out, you would get one intersection cleared, people would be able to go a couple blocks, now a next intersection is blocked. I was in the Bronx for four

hours, I was attempting to drive around during that storm, and you'd have to get out at every intersection and try to help people that were stuck [inaudible], stuck in the snow, but it was great to see New Yorkers as frustrated as they were in their cars, jumping out to help someone else to move theirs, get them off to the side. There are a lot of inexperienced drivers they're on the road. You got to tell them how to hold the car wheels, who to rock a car to be able to get some movement, but New Yorkers were out there helping one another getting them out there in that period.

**Question:** Were there extra officers deployed, especially in the Bronx and those areas to help deal with GWB, was the tour extended yesterday?

**Chief Monahan:** Tour was extended by the time that started cascading the day tour had already left, cops that were working until six we kept them on tour after that. We had cops out on intersections but as you cleared one intersection, people were going to the next intersection and it was there. There was such a cascading effect every time you cleared a block there was another issue that would happen a few blocks away.

**Question:** Question about the bridge was it properly salted, the GWB? The accident?

**Commissioner Trottenberg:** I mean I think you have to talk to the Port Authority but I think one of the things everyone struggled with was not everything got salted in time before these crashes started to occur and think that's part of what happened to them but double check with them I think that was part of what they were struggling with.

**Mayor:** Okay, hold on let's keep going, we're only going to do a few more.

**Question:** The amount of resources that you all deployed yesterday both in terms [inaudible], personnel, how did that compare to the amount that you usually deploy when you have advanced notice of five or six inches of snow.

**Mayor:** So, and I want to make sure that we're all speaking the same language so if the deployment decisions are made before by and large, with a one to two inch range, the adjustment moment, the pure, factual adjustment moment was 12:30 yesterday afternoon, but so the question you're saying is if you went ahead and made the – if you'd had the forewarning you got at 12:30 what would that kind of deployment look like?

**Question:** [inaudible] after you got the update?

**Commissioner Garcia:** Yeah so there are too things here, so one, if we had known we were in a three to five, which is plow-able snow, we would have split the shift which means that we would have gone to twelve hour tours. Everyone worked twelve hour tours yesterday, they just worked it in a staggered fashion, which makes things a little bit bumpier. So we would have all of our spreaders out, nearly seven hundred spreaders, and then we would have had an additional 1,600 plows on each of those two, twelve hour shifts. In the configuration that we were in, it ranged from – all of the spreaders were out and then it was an additional either 350 to 700 plows that were added on. The one thing I'll say and I have been think about this is at the point in which we stopped moving in the Bronx and Upper Manhattan with additional equipment would have helped and I think that's something we'll review because I am not sure that the answer is an

absolute yes. The other thing I want to tell you is that in the Bronx they were actually by three o'clock had done on average more than the rest of the city had done in terms of putting salt down. The rest of the city across – across the city it averaged about at 56 percent of all roads had had salt put down. By 3:00 pm before the worst of it hit and the Bronx was ahead. So in my looking going into the evening rush hour my feeling is like they're doing really, really well out there. And then everything in Upper Manhattan and then everything in the Upper Manhattan and the Bronx came to a complete halt.

**Mayor:** Go ahead.

**Question:** Do you have any numbers on the school bus delays? How many school buses were delayed [inaudible] how many children? And also what do you say to those parents who waited six hours after 1:00 am with no idea where the child was. We spoke to dad whose special needs son was on the bus for six hours with no [inaudible] and no [inaudible].

**Chancellor Carranza:** Yes, so again. Perfect storm and its unacceptable. As the Mayor mentioned were working right now on having those tracking systems on all of our buses. Even in those specific cases where students were on buses for extended periods of time. The adults on those buses did extraordinary work to keep them safe, keep them warm, keep them out harm's way. Again, so it's unacceptable, we know that approximately 10-12 percent of our entire bus routes – over 8,000 bus routes, 10-12 percent of them were impacted by the storm yesterday. So they were delayed to significantly delayed. I would say the case that you used as an example would be a significant delay. And there was a cascading effect with that as well which we saw this morning as well. So as those bus drivers – remember some of them start their routes at 4:30 am to 5:30 am and then you get to 1:00 am – now they've been driving for so long. They couldn't take the routes this morning. So there was a cascading effect in terms of capacity. When you knock out 10-12 percent of your bus drivers it creates a real safety issue. So again, to those parents one thing that I do want to make sure it that as those cases became known to us we were making phone calls to those parents and letting them know and then today we've had a whole process where we've been making phone calls. I even made some calls to parents as well. And I will say to you that the parents that I've spoken to were very frustrated just like the Mayor is but they were also very understanding and at the end of most of the cases they were very grateful that their children got home safely.

**Mayor:** I'll do a few more.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor.

**Mayor:** Back there.

**Question:** Does this at all solidify the hypotheses to you that there are just too many people relying on cars in this city and change you calculus at all on something like congestion pricing.

**Mayor:** There's unquestionably too many cars, and you know we believe in this city that we have got to consistently get people out cars. I think the number one way to do that is more and better mass transit which is why we're doing more select bus service; we're doing more ferry service. We're going to have the BQX, a lot of other things. I have said repeatedly that I remain open on the conversation of congestion pricing if the underlying fairness issue can get addressed.

I have not seen that kind of proposal yet, but I am open. But I just saw also want to be real. That would address a piece theoretically, a piece of the problem. It does not address your beginning of the question, which is people are too reliant on their cars and we have to help them have a real better alternative. Yes?

**Question:** A lot of parents still want to know why afterschool activities were cancelled when the weather is fine today?

**Mayor:** So I really want to emphasize this point that all the pieces connect. Rich is going to talk about the fact that when school bus service got messed up that had ramifications for after school. We need to if we decided in a case like that that something needs to be canceled. There's not going to be enough personnel there to take care of the kids. It's not going to be safe. We've got to find a way to get that word out as early as humanly possible because parents have a lot of arrangements they have to make, a lot of changes they have to make. I know when my kids were young when there was anything that changed about their schedule it sent us into a frenzy to try to come up with an alternative. I want to make sure we're very, very sensitive to parents on that. But Richard, can you talk about exactly why those changes had to be made.

**Chancellor Carranza:** Sure, so again, student safety is paramount in this particular situation. So, knowing what happened last night into early this morning, the 10-20 percent – 10-12 percent of our bus fleet and drivers that were impacted, we had bus drivers that just couldn't come in this morning. We also know that we – I've talked a little bit about faculties that stayed at their schools. We also know that our teachers and our faculty members got home very late last night because they were stuck in the traffic as well. So, as we started getting those reports this morning and accurate information about what that cascading impact was for us, it became very apparent to us that we weren't going to have the bus capacity to support field trips, which is the first thing we called off this morning. As we got more and more information, it became very apparent that after school transportation is going to be an issue, and also personnel to supervise those after school activities, so we called it off as early as we could. But to the Mayor's point, we always want to give parents as much information as early as possible to be able to make those decisions. So, one of the after action items that we're reviewing in the DOE is how do we make that communication protocol earlier as well so parents have that information. But it's also one of these cases, I mean – I've been in education for a long time, you never make the perfect decision, but, you know, yesterday the criticism was why didn't you call off school at the very late hour of 12:30-1 o'clock in the afternoon. And today, we called off programs early in the morning, but why did you call them off so early? So, it's one of those things that I get the frustrated from parents. We are working hard to get you as much information as early as possible to make those decisions, as possible.

**Mayor:** We'll take one more if there's anything we haven't covered on snow – going once, twice, last one. Yes?

**Question:** Can you guys talk about the damage [inaudible] the trees that fell and how it was all handled?

**Mayor:** Yeah – Mitch, do you have those numbers?

**Commissioner Mitch Silver, Department of Parks and Recreation:** As of 3:30, I'm getting reports every hour. There are about almost 3,000 service requests, and that includes downed trees, dangling limbs and falling limbs. Now, a service request is a complaint that we get in. We're trying to determine by doing inspections what exactly is the nature and if those are duplicate or triplicate calls. We do know that a majority of the calls are coming from Manhattan, which is rare. And so we're deploying extra crews from Brooklyn and Queens. Our priority first is to clear the streets so that people can move through and emergency responders can get through. We do want to thank both NYPD and Fire because they responded overnight when trees started coming down. Our crews started 6 am this morning and will be working 12-hour shifts over the next few days to inspect and address both the downed trees and the limbs. So, there were some cases where it actually immobilized traffic as well, that's why we prioritized making sure we clear the streets so that vehicles get through.

**Commissioner Trottenberg:** Can I just add – it was just – because you were asking for cascading factors and we did neglect to mention just the other unusual thing about the storm – I think we were looking, it's been many, many decades that you've had a storm with this kind of snow levels and wind. Obviously, the trees still have some leaves on them because it's still early in the fall.

**Mayor:** [Inaudible] have it this early in the season.

**Commissioner Trottenberg:** So, we did have more tree limbs falling than we ordinarily would have had and that is certainly another cascading factor. Once they block roadways, getting in and removing them is a job.

**Commissioner Silver:** As well as potentially some of the wind gusts having the leaves – the wind particularly in Manhattan because it is unusual, and usually Queens, in some cases the Bronx get hardest hit with trees coming down. In this case it was Manhattan and that's why we mobilized additional crews to keep up with the demand.

**Mayor:** Okay, we're going to stop there for a second. My colleague Commissioners are going to head out and go back to work. Anyone from media who needs to make your transition do it now and then we're going to go on and talk about DOI.

Thank you, everyone.

[...]

**Mayor:** Let me do a statement first on the situation with the Department of Investigation. You've undoubtedly seen the news about our outgoing DOI Commissioner. Let me be clear, this wasn't a decision I made lightly. There's nothing more important than the Department of Investigation having honesty and integrity. According to an independent review by an investigator chosen by the outgoing Commissioner, the very top leadership at DOI repeatedly undermined the values critical to its mission. It's my job as Mayor to make a change to that DOI can do its important work, going forward.

I'm announcing the nomination of someone who I have no doubt will lead DOI independently and effectively, with the integrity and the ability that I believe defines the career employees of

that agency. Margaret Garnett is seasoned prosecutor with a track record of high-profile success as a State and federal law enforcement official. Ms. Garnett has prosecuted corrupt officials, organized crime, gang violence, white collar fraud, and international terror. She's led large teams of prosecutors and investigators in rooting out waste and fraud without fear or favor. I define Ms. Garnett's mission simply – restore trust in the agency and aggressively hold accountable those in City government violating the public's trust. I have no doubt that she's up to the task.

Let me take questions on DOI – yes?

**Question:** I heard someone say as soon as they heard this that this akin to President Trump firing Robert Mueller. How would you respond?

**Mayor:** It's a ridiculous comparison. It's just apples and oranges if ever there was. Commissioner Peters took a series of actions that lead to whistleblower complaints. Those whistleblower complaints created a problem that literally was unknown in the history of New York City government, because we had never a whistleblower complaint against a DOI Commissioner in anyone's memory in this government. The process that had to be created was to choose an independent investigator to evaluate what happened. The independent investigator was chosen by Mark Peters with the agreement of the Law Department, went and did the investigation, came back and said there had been abuse of power, there had been inappropriate treatment of employees. It's quite clear in what has been put out in the McGovern report that these are the type of activities not becoming of a Commissioner of DOI.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, why did you do this today? The report came out well over a month ago [inaudible] you had compiled a dossier on Peters this spring after he actually took this step. Why now? What's behind the timing of this after all of the issues we saw last night with the snow storm and everything?

**Mayor:** Well obviously, this is something that once I got the McGovern report and read it in the days immediately following its publication, I was deeply troubled. A lot of members of the senior team at City Hall were deeply troubled. We had to think about it, but it increasingly was clear to me that there was no way for him to continue in a role, but we had to have a suitable successor. And we've been undertaking that process to find someone we thought we would be truly effective, truly independent and could really, again, restore the trust and address the problems that had occurred, and I'm convinced that Margaret Garnett is that person. As soon as we had that person, it was time to make the announcement.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, do you think the Yeshiva investigation has merit?

**Mayor:** I don't comment on any investigation. If there's an investigation, we will fully cooperate. I haven't been given any details on it, but whatever work DOI is doing or will do in the future, we will fully cooperate.

**Question:** So, it wasn't a factor in any way in the decision to fire him.

**Mayor:** No.

**Question:** In 2016, when there were a number of investigations going on, did Mr. Peters or his staff ever threaten to come and seize City Hall computer servers. And if that has any truth to it, did they threaten to do that with armed guards?

**Mayor:** I'm not familiar with those specifics. I can't say whether it happened or not. As you ask it, I'm not familiar with those specifics.

**Question:** The McGovern report is lengthy, you mentioned it, but can you talk about your reading of it and what elements in there stood out for you and were essential to your [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** I was really struck by Anastasia Coleman repeatedly and respectfully asking whether what was being asked of her was illegal and that the answers were so, not only disrespectful but non-responsive to an essential question that any public servant would ask. You're not supposed to follow an instruction if it's illegal. And of course, the denigrating approach towards her and other employees was unacceptable. A lot – but I think it was clear to me that something was fundamentally broken.

**Question:** Mayor, the McGovern report was also very critical of Mark Peters' first deputy [inaudible] she's going to be in charge of the Department, pending the City Council having a say on your nominee. Is there concern for you about there being [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** I'm just looking forward on this one. We've found a successor who is first-rate. Margaret Garnett comes out of the gold standard law enforcement entity in this nation, the Southern District of New York – extremely distinguished career – obviously now in one of the most senior positions in the Attorney General's Office. This is exactly the kind of person that the agency needs right now. It will be up to her to figure out how to proceed with the whole approach to DOI. That's what I'm focused on. She'll be in place – the Council will go through its process, but she'll be in place soon enough.

**Question:** Just in terms of the Council process, I take it the Charter mandate said there's also a process for dismissing a DOI Commissioner. What do you expect to happen next?

**Mayor:** How do you mean?

**Question:** There's a process I guess where the Council has to be informed of why you've taken this action?

**Mayor:** No, the Charter mandate is that the specific issues that led to the dismissal have to be presented. The Commissioner is given until close of business Wednesday to respond. The specific issues are literally everything that came out of the McGovern report. But in the meantime, we've presented Ms. Garnett's name to the City Council. Their process will now proceed but obviously it will take more than three days.

**Question:** Do you have any concern with the Council perhaps not going with your selection? Councilman Torres who is the chair of the investigations committee, he was disappointed that Mark Peters was fired. He said that – you know, he praised him for the investigations he had done, particularly to City Hall. Do you feel that the City Council will affirm your selection?

**Mayor:** I think the City Council has always, in my view, had a very responsible, professional approach to the consent process and here is a prosecutor with impeccable credentials, someone who I have no prior relationship with whatsoever, and I think they will look at the nomination onto itself. And I will never speak for them, but I think they'll see someone they'll be impressed by.

**Question:** Who else in your administration has been fired?

**Mayor:** Look, the situation is that every personnel decision is specific. Every trajectory is different. I am not going to get into chapter and verse. There are times when there's a reasoned conversation that things aren't working out and someone decides to move on. There's times when people have come forward and say, I don't feel like it's working out. This is, I think, a rare time when it came down to something as cut and dry as this, but each one is individual.

**Question:** Can you give one verse?

**Mayor:** I think I've told you what I'm going to tell you. Let me get someone who hasn't had a chance first.

**Question:** You obviously appointed Mr. Peters, did you regret that? Did you exhibit some sort of traits while in office that you didn't know or foresee that he [inaudible]?

**Mayor:** Yes and yes. I do regret it. Look, I'm very, very proud of the people that I've named. If you do a composite of the hundreds of people I've named, I think overwhelmingly they've been really good quality public servants. I think this was a mistake and I think there were some signs. I never would have imagined anything like this though.

**Question:** One, are you concerned that Commissioner Peters might try to fight this? He has the ability and he's saying he's going to respond in writing at some point over the next couple of days. Are you concerned at all that he might air out any dirty laundry?

**Mayor:** There's no dirty laundry to air out, he can say whatever he wants. Every investigation from anywhere – internal, external – we've cooperated with – very comfortable with those facts being discussed. I expect him to respond. I have no idea how he'll respond, but I do know that on the specific issues raised in the McGovern report, he has responded to those previously and I don't think those answers are sufficient. I don't know what he's going to say but I feel like we've done things the right way.

**Question:** [Inaudible]

**Mayor:** What's that?

**Question:** If he refuses to leave, if he wants to fight it.

**Mayor:** The law is abundantly clear, take a look at the City Charter. It couldn't be clearer.

**Question:** You said you have no prior relationship with Margaret Garnett. Anybody else in your administration, such as Zach Carter? And then secondly, Peters' reports exposed some serious



lapses, such as issues at NYCHA and the Rivington case. You were very critical of someone [inaudible] speaks to the perception that an executive is firing the person who investigation him and exposed real issues.

**Mayor:** Yeah – and I’m just going to ask everyone – I will happily take the follow-up [inaudible] because I want to dignify each question, but that’s a lot of material so let’s try and do the first one, which is straightforward. I do not have a pre-existing relationship with her. I don’t know of anyone, certainly senior at City Hall, who does. There may be some, but I don’t know of them. I don’t believe Zach Carter does.

On the perception issue, I think people who look at this will analyze it this way – there were reports that were critical to City agencies, that’s normal for DOI. I might have agreed or disagreed with any individual recommendation or any individual analysis, but DOI is meant to be critical of City agencies. And that went on for years and we’ve continued to respect that process. What changed was, very clearly documented, an effort by the Commissioner to usurp the power of another investigatory agency without any attempt to recognize the limitations of the law, without any meaningful dialog with City Hall, and then when the person he named had the audacity to say you’re asking me to do something illegal and she would not follow that order, she was summarily fired, and then an independent investigation by an investigator of his own choosing delineating all of those mistakes and abuses of power. The DOI Commissioner is supposed to be most pristine of all – that’s not pristine. So, I think anyone who looks at these facts will say that this was the right time to make a change and that Margaret Garnett is unquestionably the kind of person who should be holding that role.

**Unknown:** We have time for two more on anything.

**Mayor:** You want to do anything – could be DOI, could be anything else. We’re going to do just a few more. Yes?

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, how did you find Ms. Garnett? How did you get in touch with her? What sort of search was done for a replacement for Mr. Peters when you decided you wanted to get him out.

**Mayor:** We have a personnel operation, functions all year long, and that operation sought suitable names. I don’t know the exact way her name emerged, but her name came forward in recent days. She was vetted, the vetting was impeccable. And I talked to her this week, and after a couple of conversations was convinced she was the right person.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, could you or Mr. Fuleihan walk us through what the meeting was like?

**Mayor:** What meeting, I’m sorry.

**Question:** The meeting with Mr. Peters today.

**Mayor:** He was there, I was not.

**Question:** Could you tell us how it went?

**Deputy Mayor Dean Fuleihan:** The meeting was very – we presented – I presented the findings that go to the DCAS Commissioners that really are the McGovern report. It was that simple and it's a termination, which allows a period of three days through next Wednesday for him to respond. It was that simple.

**Question:** How did he react?

**Deputy Mayor Fuleihan:** He took it, accepted the document, looked through it and that was it.

**Question:** Mr. Mayor, I have a conceptual question for you about apologies.

**Mayor:** About apologies – sure.

**Question:** Do you think people should apologize for things if they're fully to blame?

**Mayor:** I think there are times when anyone in personal life, or certainly a public servant, has done something wrong knowingly and particularly if they are directly responsible or singularly responsible – there's definitely times to apologize. But I do not feel comfortable, first of all, with the incessant desire to assign specific blame where it may not exist, or to find comfort in seeking blame. If you're talking about this storm, it's obviously very complex, it wasn't about one City agency or one City leader that could have averted what we just talked about. But there's other times where an apology is absolutely appropriate and needed. It's very individual.

**Question:** So, an apology implies blame to you.

**Mayor:** Yes, absolutely.

**Unknown:** We've got time for one more.

**Question:** Why weren't you present at the meeting with Mr. Peters? You guys go back a while, why weren't you there?

**Mayor:** Look, I just think it was best to have the First Deputy Mayor who has handled that relationship over the last year. I don't deal with the DOI Commissioner on a day-to-day. I think that was the appropriate way to handle it.

Okay, thanks, everyone.

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