As your Town Supervisor and Chair of the Ontario County Board of Supervisors, I want to address an issue that has recently impacted our community, and the step taken to help resolve that issue: the declaration of a county wide state of emergency to purchase road salt from Canada.

While this winter has been more traditional than extra harsh, it has given us plenty of weather that requires us to treat our roads with salt to ensure public safety. As a result, our local road salt supplies have been rapidly depleted, creating a significant challenge for maintaining safe and passable roads. The safety of our residents is our top priority, and we must ensure that our roads remain clear and safe for travel.

The road salt shortage is not unique to Ontario County; it is a widespread issue affecting many municipalities across the state. Several factors have contributed to this shortage, including disruptions in the supply chain, increased state regulations, operational challenges at salt mines, and our particular supplier overcommitting with its contracts for 2024-2025 from 17 counties to 30. These challenges have made it difficult for us to secure the necessary amount of road salt from our contracted supplier.

In response to this urgent situation, and in consultation with county staff, I took the proactive step of declaring a state of emergency for Ontario County specifically relating to the lack of road salt for our region. This emergency declaration allows Ontario County to expedite the purchasing process and secure road salt from alternative sources, in this case, from suppliers in Canada. (Ontario County does not typically purchase road salt. It contracts with towns to plow county roads and the towns purchase salt to meet these needs.) Towns by themselves would not have the purchasing power or the financial means to purchase the large quantity of salt needed to make a deal like this work. The state of emergency declaration allows the county to purchase enough salt for all the municipalities that are in need and have it delivered to each highway department. (These emergency purchases are sometimes 2-3x more expensive than a contracted price.) Each town will then reimburse the county for their purchase. I should also add that based on our contract, our current supplier is required to reimburse us the difference between our contracted price and what we end up paying during this emergency situation. By taking this step, we can ensure that our roads remain safe and accessible, and we can also ensure that our town will be protected financially.

I understand that the lack of salt may have caused some concern, and I want to assure you that we are doing everything possible to address the shortage. I would also like to commend our highway department for the tremendous work they do on our roads 24/7. Your safety is our top priority, and we are committed to taking all necessary measures to ensure that our roads remain safe and passable throughout the winter season.