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TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS HOLDS Q-AND-A ON ASYLUM SEEKERS

Mayor Eric Adams: Thank you. I do need your help with something. A few days ago we had a letter that came out saying that there are a bunch of hotels out there and why aren't we using them? Can you ask the city council where's the list? We can't get it. They said there were 10 hotels that was available and we should be using them. If you guys — ladies can find the list, that would be very helpful. People need to stop criticizing. They need to step up. That's where we are right now. Step up.

This is a crisis. This team that's standing behind me, as I stated in my speech, they have heroically responded to this crisis that we are facing, of a humanitarian proportion, that was created by human hands. We're going to do what we have to do in New York, but we do need help to deal with this crisis that we are facing. We're open to any questions.

Question: Mayor, could you just describe a little bit more about what the emergency order will entail (inaudible) suspension of the (inaudible) regulation will look like?

Sylvia Hinds-Radix, Corporation Counsel, Law Department: We are going to be using a facility on Randall's Island. A land use requirement just allows for that, for us to be able to build out on Rikers Island. It does not suspend all our city laws, but just the land use laws.

Question: The emergency order. Any detail on what that would entail?

Hinds-Radix: It would be forthcoming.

Question: Mayor, you said that the current crisis is unsustainable if it continues at this pace. If the federal government and the White House doesn't respond to you today or in the coming days, what does unsustainable look like? What will happen?

Mayor Adams: We're talking about potentially 100,000 thousand people going into next year, months away and we are going to continue to pivot, shift, modify, to address the crises. We never thought we would be at a point where we have to build out the (inaudible) that we're building out, but with the lack of hotel space, we indicated the number of emergency hotels that we opened. We know that as this crisis continues to grow without help, we're going to have to continue to use the brain power of those who are standing next to me to continue to modify and shift accordingly. The real challenges that we are having, which is very fascinating, is that as we

try to find hotels, I cannot tell you how many Council people, local electives, that are yelling, "House people," but saying, "Not in my district." We can't have it both ways.

Question: I was wondering, Mr. Mayor, if you could expand on what you mean when you want President Biden to come up with a decompression strategy at the border. Are you asking him to slow the flow of migrants?

Mayor Adams: No. This is going to take a national coordination and it should be handled at the border. Should be handled at the border and ensure when people come in, number one, they should be allowed to go to the destinations that they desire and not just incentivized to go to New York or Washington or Chicago, as it currently is being put in place. Then we should ensure that the entire country absorbs this influx of asylum seekers, so that we are not leaning on three cities in the northern part of the country. That is the role of the national government.

Question: Mr. Mayor, going back to your opening comments about the Council. I understand you're skeptical about where they are. They're skeptical about where you are. I talked with Council Member Ayala who said she got a half hour heads up before the plan was switched to Randall's Island in her district. Do you see willing partners in the Council or are you purposefully cutting them out of the process?

Mayor Adams: No, no. We communicate with the Council and there's a large number of Council men and women who have been extremely cooperative. They understand the purpose. They've reached out and told us locations. Councilman Erik Bottcher has been just unbelievable with this situation. He realizes that it's a crisis and he says, I need to step up and help. Everyone, this is an all hands on deck moment. Everyone must do that and there's some deafening silence that's coming from other parts of government. You would think that we don't have a crisis in the City of New York right now. You would think that this is not an issue that the city is facing that is going to impact providing services for long term residents in the city. It is. This is going to impact every area of life in New York City.

Question: (Inaudible) involve the local Council member in advance. Why just that 30 minute heads up?

Mayor Adams: When you say in advance, 30 minutes from changing the location. There's other...

Question: The press release went out the other night.

Mayor Adams: There's other aspects of this, that we've been in continuing conversations with the Council person and some of this stuff, the movement must be rapid. This is not one of these operations where we can sit down and analyze what's taking place. We had nine buses yesterday. We have eight buses today. We're getting hundreds of people that are coming here and it's going to take real time movement and that's what this team has been doing. The Council person who feels they have not been in communication — we have updated Council people's, individuals, every step of the way of what we are doing. We're not playing surprises or gotchu, we need their help. We want them to assist us in identifying locations in their districts where we could house the asylum seekers, be part of the strategies that we are putting together. We have been communicating with them all the time on this.

Question: Mr. Mayor, for Univision, the majority of our audience has a big issue with housing. With all the seekers that are coming, thousands of them and we have thousands of people that are responding from eviction right now to speak, how can you really house them? They've been waiting for years, when we have all these influx of immigrants coming in?

Mayor Adams: I'm glad you asked that question. You just defined the crisis we're talking about and that is why we indicated several times in my speech today that we must be here for long-term New Yorkers. We're looking at how to expedite the process of getting people into permanent housing. We are looking at how we can continue to make sure that we continue to be there for long-term New Yorkers. Yes, we have a housing crisis, pre asylum seekers, we've had a housing crisis.

Question: (Inaudible) by waiting on the elections to maybe have a shift of government in Texas?

Mayor Adams: I cannot predict what people are thinking. Yeah, I can't predict what people are thinking.

Question: Does that mean that you have told El Paso to stop sending migrants here and you're ending that coordination agreement? Also separately, some of our reporters reported that four buses dropping off migrants to Port Authority were stopped this morning and some of the drivers were ticketed. They were coming from Texas and also Mexico. Is City Hall aware of this? Does City Hall potentially order this (inaudible) these buses?

Mayor Adams: Well, two things. Number one, I said it over and over again, Bernadette, and you know guys keep reporting. There was never an agreement for El Paso to send asylum seekers here. We never told them, please send us your asylum seekers. That has never happened. We will never do that. We have our own issue here and we have really — when you look at it, as it's been reported, New York State has some of the largest numbers of asylum seekers. We are doing our share and so there was never that agreement. El Paso, the city manager, the mayor, they should stop sending buses to New York. New York cannot accommodate the number of buses that we have coming here to our city. I think that it is crucial for us to get that accurate because we don't want to send a signal out there that New York is telling any municipality that we could accommodate the influx of asylum seekers that we are talking about. There was a second part of your question, Bernadette?

Question: At around 6 a.m. a couple buses that were transporting migrants to the Port Authority were stopped and ticketed by the NYPD. I'm wondering if City Hall was aware of this or if City Hall potentially (inaudible) the NYPD to stop the bus loads and investigate what's going?

Mayor Adams: We're not going to target any specific bus operation, but we are going to make sure that the asylum seekers and people on our roads are safe. And so the New York City Police Department and whatever entity is being used, I'm hoping they're out there doing that job correctly, because we are concerned about the safety as the asylum seekers and the safety of New Yorkers.

Question: Do you know about it beforehand? Do you know about it before it happens?

Mayor Adams: Before...

Question: (Inaudible.)

Mayor Adams: Oh, I'm on TrafficStat, what the Police Department is doing... I do TrafficStat all the time and identify a dangerous situation. And I say, make sure we clamp down on any dangerous situation.

Question: Mr. Mayor, when you say that you have the situation handled at the border, you probably get agreement from Governor Abbott in that. Are you open to any — a joint appeal of the president with Abbott?

Mayor Adams: Any type of what, I'm sorry?

Question: Are you open to any joint appeal with Governor Abbott or any other Texas officials to try to get it handled at the border?

Mayor Adams: No, Governor Abbott made it clear. First of all, he lied and stated that he wasn't doing this since April. He was caught lying by his own news outlets in Texas. He's just untrustworthy. We attempted to coordinate with him, he stated that we didn't. We had to produce the emails that show we were. And so I think the issue is to do a decompression strategy from the national government, to make sure that we can ensure that these asylum seekers are spread throughout the entire country. We all should be part of resolving this issue.

Question: Hi, Mayor Adams. I wanted to ask you, going back to the Randall's Island center, will that still be kept for the 96 hour timeframe or will they need a longer term? And you have a better sense of what the estimate of a billion dollars, six billion dollars will go for? I don't know if there's a breakdown you can provide?

Mayor Adams: First, I want to be very clear. This is an ever moving and evolving crisis and I am not going to allow our team to be cornered into, "You said 96 hours and you did 96 hours and 30 minutes." No, this is an evolving, constantly moving crisis. Our goal is to use this as a location that we can find out how to give the best services to those who are in need. It may need be that they want to go to another destination. It may need that they may have to go into some type of different type of housing, or they want to connect with their loved one and a family member. That's the purpose of that, that's not a long term location where people are going to be there for weeks.

We're going to minimize the amount of time they're going to spend there, so that we can do a proper evaluation and this is the best way to do it. And we're going to continue to look for hotels. We're going to continue to do the other things in spaces, but right now we need to take the pressure off the flow of asylum seekers that we're getting here. And once we have that built out accordingly, we're going to utilize it to the best of our ability to assist this as one aspect of dealing with this crisis we are facing.

Question: I wanted to ask you, you mentioned that you've been in contact with the governor's office about identifying other locations for these belief centers and resources. Can you elaborate,

what are those other locations that have been identified and what other resources you're asking the governor's office for?

Mayor Adams: Well, I laid it out in this speech of... There are plenty of locations that are under state control that I believe we should look at. We right now — I'm not going to disclose exact locations where they are. We wanted them to materialize and as we do them, I'll announce them, just as that we announced on Randall's Island. There's a number of locations that we believe the state could assist us in opening. And as soon as we get the approval from them, the inspections, the state that they're suitable for people to be inside, we're going to make a formal announcement.

Question: You hinted in the past of legal action. Are you still considering that? Is there any legal action you can take against Texas or Arizona or El Paso, for that matter?

Mayor Adams: Judge Hinds-Radix and her team, they're looking at all the legal components that's involved here and we get a concrete method to address this in the courtrooms. We're going to do that.

Question: Are you concerned that you're putting President Biden and Governor Hochul in a difficult position politically? There's an election a month from now and this is probably not what they want to be talking about.

Mayor Adams: No, not at all. I think that my conversations with the White House, my conversation with the president last week, a week and half ago — and the mayor has dog years — when I sat down with him, he understood the urgency of the moment. My conversations and the team speaking with the governor's office, they understand the urgency of the situation. There was never a time that they stated that Eric, "Oh, we don't want to engage in this conversation because it's too political." Nope, they did not do that at all. They understand that this is an urgent situation and New York needs help, and we are going to continue to coordinate with the White House and coordinate with the governor's office and our lawmakers. The lawmakers need to be in this also, the leaders of the Senate and Assembly. This is impacting the entire State of New York.

Question: Do you think fewer migrants should come into the United States and should a migrant still feel welcome in New York?

Mayor Adams: I think that anyone that's fleeing persecution, that is fleeing violence — the history of this country has always been tied to welcoming those who are fleeing harm and that is a spirit of this country and must be done in an organized way. I think it's imperative that a national problem must be solved by the national government. And I believe that we will always be responsible as New Yorkers, to make sure whoever comes here, we're going to do our job and that's what we have done.

I think that New York has been a role model on how to effectively use our infrastructure to address the crisis and make sure we treat people in a humane way, and that's what we have done and how we address these national problems that is far greater than what I can answer.

Question: Mayor, (inaudible) number migrants in a car complaining about lack of heat and lack of food. Could you address that?

Mayor Adams: Now, anytime we receive any form of concerns about living environments, we immediately respond to it. We've done an amazing job of making sure that not only are we giving beds and a safe place, but we are providing food, we're providing education, we're providing healthcare, we're providing transportation for those who are in need. We're giving them how to fill out the identification cards of... So we are not saying, "Well, here's what we are required to do." No, we're saying what we are morally responsible to do and that is what we're looking at. And so if there's a location that someone is not meeting our standards, we are immediately investigating and we are immediately rectifying and correcting the situation. We're not going to allow people to live in unsafe conditions and that is what we are going to continue to do.

Question: Can you give an indication of how many (inaudible) stations there are? And, how are you helping (inaudible)?

Mayor Adams: Do you have an answer to that?

Commissioner Manuel Castro, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs: So far about a third of each of the buses that arrive, we find people wanting to go to other destinations at the humanitarian centers, which we will be set up, will provide support for those who want to move on to other cities and states.

Question: Just about what about cities are (inaudible) Venezuelans?

Commissioner Castro: Well, the largest population of Venezuelans in the country are in Florida, and that's where most people indicate they wish to be. The only free buses that exist at the border are those who are coming to New York and now Chicago.

Question: (Inaudible) get back down to Florida?

Commissioner Castro: We'll see. It really is up to the individuals. We want to make sure that we support people, get to where they wish to go themselves.

Question: Then for funding, where are we in that assistance?

Commissioner Castro: Dr. Long, I don't know if you want to, we're setting this up at the (inaudible) center. We'll see how many people wish to be re-ticketed or supported to arrive to their destinations. Thank you.

Dr. Ted Long, Senior Vice President of Ambulatory Care, New York City Health + Hospitals: Let me talk a little bit about what the humanitarian centers are and then I'll answer your question about funding. The humanitarian centers are a new way of doing things. The new humanitarian centers, as the mayor said, have New York City compassion and New York City affectedness to help to answer the most important question, what do people come in here want and where do they want to go?

When you come in through the front door of our new humanitarian centers, it's a different way of doing things. We're going to greet you with a comfort team. You've come a long way. We're going to offer you food and water. We want to make sure you're comfortable. We're going to show you where the dining area is which has three hot meals a day with South American cuisine. We're gonna show you where you're going to be sleeping. We're going to show you the area where we have iPads and phones that you can use to reconnect with your family members.

Then beyond that, we're going to talk to you about the most important part, which includes re-ticketing and where we're going to help you to get where you want to go. We're going to have a team of expert case managers there that speak your language. Some of them may be staff we bring in, some of them may be trusted community members from our community-based organizations. The contention of the whole thing is so that, as Commissioner Castro was saying, we're doing re-ticketing right now at Port Authority, but we only have 45 minutes to figure out where you might want to spend the next several years of your life. That's not enough time.

In the new humanitarian centers, we're going to have days, and as the mayor said, 96 hours is our goal, but if it's going to take longer, we'll take longer with you. Our goal here is to help you, but we're going to do a much better job of helping you get what you want, going where you want to go. If we have several days, with all the uses of modern technology, with the case management system, with community based organizations then we would in a mere 45 minutes at Port Authority.

With the re-ticketing part of the operation, it is a really important part. I do want to make the point, it's not the only way that we're re-connecting people. If you have family in Queens, but you're at Port Authority, might be kind of hard to get there if you've not been to New York City before, so that might require a different mechanism. Right now we're looking to, we've been in discussions with the state and we're looking to other not-for-profit organizations also to help us with how we can be able to conveniently get people re-ticketed to wherever they'd want to go. Thank you.

Question: The funds are coming from the city in other words? Sorry.

Mayor Adams: It's going to come from a combination of sources. We're going to really need nonprofits to assist us. We're going to reach out to some of our corporate partners. This is where the all hands on deck moment is about and what we are attempting to do. I don't think people really heard the depth and the well thought out way we are helping people who are coming to the city. I just find it surprising that when people do a proper analysis of what this team has done, that people just want to critique, criticize, and say what should have been done. We've stepped up. We've stepped up.

I would really challenge, go look at what others are doing. Go look at what people are doing in other places. New York should be proud of what we have accomplished and what we are doing and what you just laid out, doctor, is exactly what we're doing. We are taking people, taking our time, giving them the support that they need during this traumatic experience that they are going through right now. I don't care who you are in this room. You trace your lineage, we all came from somewhere, all of us. The same thing some people are saying about these migrants and asylum seekers, they said about your ancestors. Same thing so we need to think about that.

Question: In your speech, you mentioned something about a possible plan to have New Yorkers house asylum seekers in their own residences. Did I hear that right? Can you expand more on that idea, the plan?

Mayor Adams: Yeah, we're building it out. I met with the mayor of one of the Polish cities last week and he shared that when they received a large number of migrants from the Ukraine, that they put in place a process where every day people of Ukraine, Poland were able to take into their homes. We are looking at the legal aspects of those New Yorkers because New Yorkers have been reaching out to us and say, "How could we help?"

Some people have spare apartments, some people have rooms that they want to share. New Yorkers want to help and so we want to make sure that we do it in a legal way that allows people to help. We're formalizing that plan so that if you may be someone from Venezuela that is doing well here, you want to help a Venezuela family. You want to give people that outlet to do so. That's what we're formalizing, but we want to make sure we do it within the confines of the law.

Question: Yeah, Mr. Mayor, regarding the land use portion of your announcement, just hoping for some more details on that and are you talking about suspending ULURP citywide?

Mayor Adams: No, we're not. No, we're not. We're going to be very specific and as the judge stated, as it gets laid out, she will be very specific on what we need just to deal with this crisis.

(Crosstalk.)

Question: Mr. Mayor, on solitary confinement or punitive segregation, the speakers indicated that this is going to pass. It has widespread support in the Council. May have seen what happened last week with a bit of a confrontation outside on the steps. Where are you on this concept of punitive segregation and when this bill passes, what will be your reaction to it?

Mayor Adams: Well, first of all, I'm glad that you said solitary confinement, punitive segregation, because people tend to keep reporting that I'm in support of solitary confinement. By you saying both this clears up I believe that people who are violent and dangerous should be removed from the population. That's what we do on the streets. You slash someone on the street, you don't allow them to stay among innocent people. Over 80 percent of the people who are attacked by those in punitive segregation, over 80 percent are other inmates. They're just trying to serve their time and they are assaulted by a small number of inmates.

If this bill passes, based on what I read, I'm going to do an evaluation and if need be, use the power of veto to stop it. We've had a lot of conversations with Council people. Anyone that saw the hearing would have to ask themselves, "What are we talking about here?" The discussion of before you put someone in punitive segregation, give them a trial to determine if they did they act, but you are going to leave them in a dangerous environment. This just doesn't make sense. It just doesn't make sense that we will put correction officers in harm's way and civilians who work on the island and other inmates. I just think the Council should really think through this bill before they make that decision. We have been speaking with Council people and I believe the conversations are going fairly well.

Question: Your reaction, Mr. Mayor, to the upstate judge...

Mayor Adams: You know I'm not into this calling out stuff.

Question: Upstate ruling with the new gun laws. What's your reaction? How is the city going to respond?

Mayor Adams: You all have heard me say over and over again, if there's one thing that keeps me up at night is that Supreme Court decision around the gun laws. We did our job here in the state and passed laws that will protect everyday New Yorkers. The governor and attorney general, they are going to appeal the decision of my understanding, I think... Who has you smiling? (Laughter.)

(Crosstalk.)

Mayor Adams: We believe... So we believe it should be appealed. It is the wrong thing to do. We need to isolate areas where people can't carry guns. It's just irresponsible. To say New York is different from many other locations, it's too densely populated and we need to be treated accordingly.

Question: Is Commissioner Jenkins involved in the response to this humanitarian crisis? And if so, why was he not here today and why did he not testify?

Mayor Adams: Yeah, no, he is. He's going through a family crisis right now and he would've been here, but he's dealing with a personal family crisis.

Question: Mr. Mayor, this is a question from my colleague (inaudible). The man that was stabbed by a random attacker in a Bronx subway station died. Wondering, what's your reaction to that? And also this is one in a series of several high profile odd attacks. Of course, there's been tourists in Times Square, etc. What's your reaction to that and what's your message to New Yorkers about what you're doing on crime, especially as we near the end of the year?

Mayor Adams: Yeah. And I don't know the specific details. Last night the police commissioner updated me and the chief of patrol updated me on this situation and our hearts goes out to the family members. Nothing is worse than a random attack. It just really undermines your feeling of safety. We're digging into exactly what happened. It's a bizarre sense of — scenario that played out. And we are looking into it. And let's be clear, what's happening on the streets with some of these cases that you looked at, there's mental health attached to it.

Last legislative cycle, I called for really putting teeth in Kendra's Law. I think the lawmakers have to really look at that to give approval for others to determine that if a person cannot take care of themselves, how do we handle that? You see it every day. Those of us who are out in the streets, you see people are really in conditions that they can't handle themselves and we can't have this revolving hospital system where you go in, you get medication, then you put right back out until you do something that's violent. There must be a better fix to that.

Dr. Vasan is going to be bringing together experts in this area. We brought on board some experts in this administration because we want to zero in on the acts of violence that are coming from those with mental health issues. I told the Police Department to give me a list of in the last

few months number of issues and attacks and arrests that dealt with people with mental health illness and the number's pretty high and it's a real issue.

Question: Mayor, do you intend to endorse the New York 11 race between Malliotakis and Max Rose?

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: You're going to endorse Max Rose?

Mayor Adams: Yes I am. I'm going to endorse Max.

Question: Hi. So congestion pricing is under attack from every angle, including Governor Murphy who now wants Biden to slow it down. And you've said some comments that people were worried about that you didn't support it fully. So are you concerned that all these attacks could sort of throw it off course, that congestion pricing might not actually come to fruition?

Mayor Adams: No. Nope. I think that we just got to get it right. This is a major infrastructure change in our city and we have to get it right. That's all. I support the concept of congestion prices. I made that clear when I was in Albany and I still do. I just want to make sure we get it right and getting stuff right comes with debate, conversations, figuring out, making sure that we get it right. We got to make sure that we're not going to hurt other communities as we roll it out. And so the concept, I support it and we just got to get it right. That's the most important thing.

Question: Mr. Mayor, we've encountered a situation, you've said it yourself, that the immigrants come with so many needs, including healthcare desperately.

Mayor Adams: Yes.

Question: Unfortunately, the lady who passed away in one of the shelters, we created efforts to help her body go back to Colombia because we found that the consulate of her country would not pay for the body (inaudible) to take her there. In the event that happens, and there is a fatality (inaudible) of the immigrants that are coming in. Would the city provide services to transfer their bodies to their country of origin?

Mayor Adams: I'm not sure how we handle that. I know if a person is a victim of a crime, victim services will step in. We will continue to examine how do we help family members who are here. And there are ways we've helped and assisted New Yorkers during those times of emergencies of shipping of bodies and burial costs. We've known to do that and we'll continue to examine that. And so I can't give you a specific answer based on that scenario, but we will continue to show the level of compassion. And New Yorkers have stepped up, everyday New Yorkers. We've reached out to many of our partners in government and they've been partners outside of government and they've been there to help people during these crises.

Question: Do you think that your migrant policies incentivizes more migrants to come to the United States and come to New York?

Mayor Adams: Which policy is that?

Question: The ones you've laid out, (inaudible) centers, welcome centers and stuff?

Mayor Adams: Well, we have a legal and moral responsibility to help those who come here to the city. And I don't think it incentivizes people to come here. What incentivize them to come here is when the border patrol and those down at the border has a list of New York, Washington, and Chicago. And if you go anywhere else, you have to pay. But if you go to those locations, you can go for free. That's the incentives. We need to stop the incentivizing at the source. When they come here, I doubt very much that migrant seekers, when they come here, they know that hey, you could go to New York and you could get to a HURC or you could go to New York and get a municipal identification card. They don't know that. When they come here, we provide them the services. The incentivizing is taking place down at the borders.

Question: Follow up. Have you spoken to the White House about any of this stuff?

Mayor Adams: Yes. We've had great conversations with the White House. They understand...

Question: (Inaudible.)

Mayor Adams: The...

Question: The emergency (inaudible).

Mayor Adams: The emergency... Our...

Question: What you did today — have you spoken to them to give a heads up?

Mayor Adams: Yes. Yes we did. Yes we did.

Question: Thank you. Down here now. Any talk about changing the city budget for the Department of Education with the influx of kids coming? We're (inaudible) ENL services, (inaudible) teachers and (inaudible) about reviewing that budget.

Mayor Adams: No. Remember the budget is fair student funding. So if you have more children coming in and you have a greater need because you need translation services and other services, then we're going to adjust according to that. So you're basically are going to definitely get more money because of the fair student funding per child. But we are also going to look at are there greater needs and we are going to make sure that you get the money for those greater needs as well. And that is why we have a pot of money for emergencies like this so we can make sure that when situations like this come up that we can help those schools that have a greater influx.

Question: (Inaudible.)

Mayor Adams: I'm sorry.

Question: ENL Teachers?

Mayor Adams: Yes. Yes. Yep. Yep. Yep. Thank you.

Question: (Inaudible.) How are the Mets going to do?

Mayor Adams: Listen, I have been in purgatory for many years as a Mets fan. I think this is the year. For some reason, we can't get over Atlanta. But I'm excited about this year. I think that I brought some good energy to the city. Mayor Bloomberg talked about how we never had the champion in the last eight years. Year one, I think we got a ring.

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