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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO ANNOUNCES TENTATIVE CONTRACT
AGREEMENT WITH UNIFORMED SANITATIONMEN'S ASSOCIATION, LOCAL 831**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Okay, good morning, everyone. Well, this is a very good day for New York City – an exciting day. We have a contract agreement with the Uniformed Sanitationmen's Association, Local 831. This is a very important step forward for this city. We now have over 6,000 members of this local union under contract moving forward.

We rely on our sanitation workers to keep our streets clean. We rely on them to deal with everything winter throws at us. We rely on them, especially in times of crisis. And I always note, after Sandy, the extraordinary and courageous efforts of our sanitation workers. Wherever I went around the city, after Sandy hit, in the neighborhoods who were affected, people talked about how sanitation workers went above and beyond to help families get back on their feet, to help them bring a little bit of normalcy back and to get their lives moving forward.

There's tremendous appreciation all over this city for what our sanitation workers do. And I particularly appreciate – having worked closely with these men and women over years – I appreciate how they answer the call every time. I've talked about the fact that during some of the winter storms we've experienced – and we've had certainly our fair share in the last two years – you go into the garages, you talk to the sanitation workers, and they're energized for the fight. They're ready to take on whatever Mother Nature throws at them. There's a great fighting spirit and it is wonderful that we are able today to thank them for their hard work, and also move forward with these members being under contract.

I want to acknowledge everyone who helped us to get to this day – of course, our first deputy mayor, Tony Shorris; our director of labor relations and commissioner of labor relations, Bob Linn; and our sanitation commissioner, Kathryn Garcia. Thanks to all of you for your hard work bringing us to this day. And I want to thank Harry Nespoli and his entire leadership team for all they have done leading up to this contract, for all they do every day leading the men and women of your workforce to serve this city. Harry, I also want to thank you in your role as chair of the MLC. You have been one of the central figures in the municipal labor movement, helping to make sure that we could go from a situation where none of the workers of the city were under contract, to today – we're at 80 percent of our workforce under contract. A lot of that is because of your hard work and I want to thank you for that.

The – I've said, of course, how much our sanitation workers do for us every day – with the way that we've approached things for years and years – dealing with cleaning our streets, picking up our garbage, handling our recyclables, dealing with storms. This last season, I have to say, I think was one of extraordinary achievement by the sanitation department. I thank Commissioner Garcia for her leadership. And I thank all the men and women who did the work. I saw, all over the city, extraordinarily successful efforts and a lot of appreciation from the people of this city.

But we're looking over the horizon as well. And a few weeks back, we announced our One New York plan. One of the most important goals is the vision for Zero Waste to landfills by 2030. This will have a hugely positive impact on our environment, especially as the largest city in the country. This is one of the ways that we're going to take a lead in fighting global warming and reducing negative impact on our environment.

To do that, we're going to rely on the cooperation of Local 831 – and that cooperation is nothing new. This is a union that has been on the forefront of municipal labor for years and years – working to increase productivity and efficiency, working to innovate. It's been a tremendously positive partnership for years. We need a greener city. We need a city that's going to start to do things differently. Of course, we're going to be expanding composting. We're going – we are ready to go to single-stream recycling over time. There's so many new ideas that are going to be more efficient and better for the earth. And we're going to do them in partnership with this union.

As always, when we reach one of these labor deals, it's striking a balance – respecting our workforce and their needs, protecting our taxpayers, protecting our long-term fiscal health. We have struck that balance again. This – this agreement conforms to the patterns set by the previous nine uniformed services union contracts. There will be a similar raise in benefits – a total of 11 percent wage increase over seven years. And it continues the effort that we're very proud of to address the health care savings we need for the long-term fiscal health of this city. Again, that's part of the overall plan that we've put together for health care savings – \$3.4 billion dollars in total guaranteed health care savings through Fiscal '18 – for the first time, bending the cost curve on the health care costs of our city employees – turning in the right direction. And last month, our Office of Labor Relations released a detailed report updating the city on the progress we're making on those health care savings. We believe this is important for our long-term fiscal health, and so that we can continue to provide the services that New Yorkers rely on.

This union, like so many others, went for years without a contract. It did not stop them from taking on every challenge. It did not stop them from working hard. But it just wasn't fair. It's not the way people should be treated. We have taken a big step forward today to respect the hard work of the men and women of the sanitation department. Again, this brings us to a point where we are now at 80 percent of the city workforce under contract. And we got there, as Harry Nespoli will attest. And he is one of the people who have spoken most powerfully in this city for years about the need for a meaningful and respectful dialogue. And I – Harry, I've heard you say publically and privately, so much can be achieved when there is that mutual respect and that openness. Thank you for your leadership, and we have evidence today that that is actually the right way to do things. Let me just say a few words in Spanish before turning to Commissioner Garcia and to President Nespoli.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

With that, again, Harry, thank you for your partnership. Thank you for your leadership. And I appreciate all the hard work that brought us to this day. Congratulations to you, and your leadership team, and the men and women of your department. And you get a height boost too.

[Laughter]

[...]

Mayor: Thank you very much. I like to, on a regular basis, make fun of Bob Linn. That's part of City Hall lore – and check his scorecard on a regular basis. But Bob, I have to say, at 80 percent, you have a lot to be proud of. I'm going to give you a day or two to enjoy it. Then we'll start talking about what's next. But well done. Well done. With that, we're going to do on-topic questions here. We're going to have another press conference in a short while on the housing authority. We'll do off-topic there as well as, obviously, on-topic. But right now, we're going to do on-topic on this. Sally?

Question: Speaking of what's next, this is your first deal with the rank-and-file uniform union. Can you or Mr. Linn talk about, you know, what that means going forward with fire, police, and corrections? Do you think [inaudible] with making a deal with those unions?

Mayor: I'll start and pass to Bob. I think it's a very promising moment for the city. I think, when you have 80 percent of the workforce under contract – obviously one of our large uniformed service unions here – and of course, the superior officers who were under contract previously. It says there's a consensus about the way that we need to move forward and that this respectful dialogue has really gotten us somewhere very good. So it leaves me hopeful about what's next.

Commissioner Robert Linn, Office of Labor Relations: The best negotiations, the best contracts are solved at the table, by the parties, with each other. I think we've proved that in these negotiations, where we're able to craft a contract that worked for sanitation and worked for the city. It is my hope to sit down with everybody, including the police – who are at arbitration – but to keep the process open for a dialogue, because I think it's through the voluntary exchange, it's through the collective bargaining process that you can reach good results. So I'm hopeful, and I think this is a very, very important settlement. And we will continue to make settlements until we get to 100 percent of the workforce under contract.

Mayor: Amen.

Question: Going into 2014, were you expecting to be at 80 percent at this point? Is there a timeline you are following?

Mayor: No, I mean – as I said, you know, I was – I thought, realistically, trying to get to half of our workforce in 2014 would be a pretty difficult hill to climb right there. Obviously, we surpassed that, and it's been a steady clip since then. So, I give a lot of credit to Bob, and Tony Shorris, Dean Fuleihan – everyone who has been working together because I think these numbers are ahead of any schedule we could have realistically anticipated.

Question: I want to – just a quick question for Bob Linn and then Harry. Do you know how many – like I know you've got 80 percent. How many unions are still out? There's fire, correction – like, do you have a number?

Commissioner Linn: So, we do. You know, there are 143 labor contracts. So – that we have, I think, 52 bargaining units completed. But the bulk of the workers are in the police, fire, corrections. And that the – other groups – the prevailing rate, which is the construction workers. And those are the bulk of those that are left.

Question: And the question for Harry is – if you can just talk about the difficulties like, how difficult was it not to have these raises for your members. Like, did they have to make sacrifices? Were people really struggling?

President Harry Nespoli, Uniformed Sanitationmen's Association: They were definitely struggling, you know. Would it actually helped us a little bit – just a little [inaudible] – is the fact that, as bad as winters that were out there. You know, they were working 12 hour shifts. They were working 24 straight days. They were out there, and naturally, they were earning money also. But, come the time a person wanted to advance, a person wanted to – just got married, looking to get a house. They never had that real, steady, big income there. You were stuck – don't forget, we have a very young workforce – sanitation. And our workforce is based around five and a half years before it gets to top salary. And that top salary there is where the real money is – where you can make some money. As far as in the lower – the lower scales, it's – it's difficult to live in New York City and to actually look for – to buy a house somewhere in the area. So, the bills were piling up. I heard from my members. To answer your question – was the fact that – when are we getting the contract? How are we doing with the contract? And that's the constant that we heard – that we tried to get them as quick as possible. And as soon as this administration took over, I could tell there was a big difference at the table. They wanted to reach an agreement. They felt for the people that work, that make this city go. And we took it from there.

Question: Mr. Mayor, I'm wondering if there's – in this contract – if there's a commitment to the size of the workforce, and if you envision the number of sanitation workers changing as you reach the goal of Zero Waste in 2030.

Mayor: Well look, I'll start, and then Kathryn or Bob might want to jump in. The important thing here with that goal is that we have to protect the earth, and we have to address global warming, and this is one of the things we can do. But we think that there is tremendous creativity in this workforce, a tremendous willingness to find efficiencies, find ways to be productive. We have to work together to figure out what's the best way to get it done. So we don't have a specific template. There's obviously a goal for 2030, so this – we're just beginning. But we don't have a specific template yet of what it's going to take to get us there. We do know it'll be a cooperative process.

Commissioner Kathryn Garcia, Department of Sanitation: We did not agree to a specific headcount number, but we did agree to sit down and work collaboratively. We know that there are pluses and minuses as we move forward, but we're committed to making sure that we do this as efficiently as possible. There is some additional headcount in this coming fiscal year for the organics program. And as we move through this process with Local 831, those will obviously change.

Question: I'm just wondering, as you develop all these new programs, if the nature of the job would change where you might not need people to pick up garbage, you might need them to do other facets of the program as you move forward towards your goal.

Commissioner Garcia: Right. So, that's true, and it also varies by the geography of the city in terms of how we do our collection and what we are collecting. We are collecting a lot more recycling than we have in the past, and refuse has gone down significantly. So that has implications for how we operate. And that's what we're really looking forward to, working collaboratively with Local 831.

Question: I was just wondering if you could elaborate by what you meant by minuses. You said pluses and minuses – do you mean that, like, less workers, going forward, if you guys are collecting less waste?

Mayor: [inaudible] commissioner comes up. Again, I want to emphasize this is a plan that the goal is to achieve it by 2030. It's now 2015, so we're just starting down the road. I think the important point is we're going to do this cooperatively with the workforce. And I think it's clear, for example, in the areas of composting and recycling, there's going to be some areas where there's going to be more work to do, for sure, if we're going to meet our much more ambitious goals for composting and recycling.

Commissioner Garcia: So obviously, we're just at the beginning. I do not anticipate a decline in the workforce at all, but I do anticipate that it may move around and have different functions. For example, I would anticipate that there probably will be more people working on the recycling portion of the program, if we're successful over time, than on refuse.

Question: Mr. Mayor, I'm just wondering, are you worried about the PBA possibly breaking the pattern with the arbitration?

Mayor: Again, I'll start, and maybe Bob wants to add. Look, I feel very good about where we stand. I think there's been tremendous consistency in this process, and I give Bob a lot of credit. We have a clear pattern for our uniformed service unions. We have a clear pattern for our civilians. There's been a lot of unions that thought that made sense for their workers, and there's been constant progress. I think that's a good situation for the city overall. And again, that is crucial to this formula we set out two years ago – respect the workforce, protect the taxpayers, obviously protect our fiscal health. That's how things have gone very, very consistently.

So I think that's encouraging to any other unions that have not yet gotten to an agreement – to recognize that there's a good and fair pattern here, and to participate in it.

Commissioner Linn: So, as the mayor said, 15 months ago we started with no labor agreements. We have spent the last 15 months reaching labor agreements with one group after another – agreements that worked for the workers. Every one of them was ratified overwhelmingly by their membership, and they've worked for the city in that we could afford these contracts. I expect that we'll keep making those contacts. And I would expect that the arbitration panel will understand how important it is to maintain relationships in the city, to maintain fair treatment of all the workers in similar fashion. And I – I think we will move through this with the patterns and the structures we've created – that they'll prevail.

Question: What do you think the timeline will be for reaching 100 percent? Do you have any goal in mind – for the mayor as well?

[Laughter]

Commissioner Linn: We're moving –

Mayor: I'm going to start. I really do want to give Bob tremendous credit. This is, again, I – I don't think anyone could imagine getting to 80 percent in 15 months – I really don't. I think we – we thought we were all digging out of a hole that was years and year in the making and it was going to be a very complicated way forward. And I think the public should be very satisfied that the team at Labor Relations has done a great job. And again, it's because of leadership of people like Harry, who said, let's try respectful communication. Let's try it. Let's set a new tone. And it was good for everyone. So, I think there's good momentum, but I can't tell you that we have a perfect goal in mind of when everything gets done because each contract is individual. So, I'm hopeful you'll see some more progress in the coming months, but I can't give you an end point.

Alright. Thanks, everyone.

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