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My ref:

Your ref:

CONFIDENTIAL

The Rt Hon Norman Lamont MP
Chief Secretary
Treasury
Parliament Street
LONDON
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CHIEF SECRETARY	
REF.	- 4 AUG 1989
ACTION	Mr POTTER
COPIES TO	CX, Mr PHILLIPS
	Mr EDWARDS, Mrs LOMAX
	Mr MCINTYRE, Mr GIEVE
	Mr J. SPENCER, Mr O'DONNELL

3 August 1989

Dear Chief Secretary Mrs CHARLIN.

As you will know, Nicholas Ridley wrote to John Major on 21 July, seeking his agreement to an expanded information strategy on the Community Charge. I am sorry to press you for a speedy and favourable reply so soon after we have both taken up our new posts, but I have now completed the urgent review of our arrangements for maximising take-up of rebates, which I announced during the Opposition debate last week. You will recall that the expanded publicity strategy focused primarily on increasing awareness of rebates. Having reviewed the proposals I am convinced that they are crucial to maximising take-up.

As I said in the House, I am extremely concerned that all who need help should receive it. The right to a rebate will be perhaps the most important right in practical terms that many people will have under the new system. Yet recent research conducted by Gallup has shown that, while a majority of interviewees knew of the existence of rebates, many were unclear about eligibility. There is also lower awareness among those in poorer socio-economic groups who are, of course, those whom rebates are intended to benefit most.

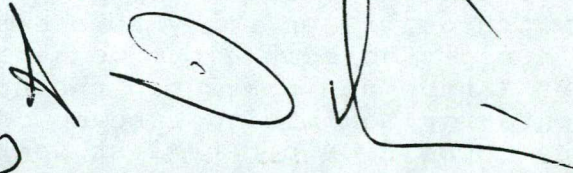
Nor is it only desirable in itself that we should increase awareness of rebates. By doing so, we shall contribute to an enhanced understanding of the Community Charge which should in turn make for smoother implementation of the whole system, to the benefit of local authorities, their potential charge revenues, and all charge payers. Our research showed substantial concern about cost and affordability. If people appreciate the fairness of the system, however, and understand that, through rebates, it meets their concerns, I consider that they are likely to participate more willingly in it.

The second reason for my writing now, is that I would like to announce our proposals as soon as possible this month. This would not only contribute significantly in increasing awareness of rebates, but would also be likely to attract widespread attention in a slack month for news.

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It is clearly necessary that we should ensure that the maximum number of people know about an important right under the new system. Indeed, I consider rebates to be a vital key to a better appreciation of this major reform. I should therefore be grateful for your speedy agreement to the proposals we have put forward.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Peter Walker, Malcolm Rifkind, Tony Newton and Sir Robin Butler.

Yours sincerely


PP
CHRIS PATTEN
(Approved by the Secretary of State
and signed in his absence)