

ALD2/2/4/12/1/30



Northern Ireland Office
Parliament Buildings
Belfast BT4 3ST

Lord Alderdice
Alliance Party of NI
88 University Street
BELFAST
BT7 1HE

15 February 1998

Dear John,

CHANCELLOR'S INITIATIVE: CONSULTING NORTHERN IRELAND POLITICAL PARTIES

I am writing to let you know that the Chancellor is willing to discuss with the Northern Ireland political parties the possibility of an economic package as a contribution to the current negotiations. He intends to come to Belfast after the Budget to talk to the parties about such a package and discuss ideas for an economic initiative.

To prepare the ground for these discussions, Adam Ingram has agreed to have preliminary discussions with each of the parties in advance of the Chancellor's visit. Clearly it would be helpful if the parties could consider what might realistically be done to boost the performance of the economy and to stimulate investment in the most depressed areas. This would ensure that discussions with the Chancellor could focus on the key issues. In these bilaterals, Adam Ingram will provide briefing on the Government's economic and financial policies and on other relevant background. These preliminary discussions will also enable us to explore the economic issues which might be of interest to your party.

Adam proposes to set aside time over the next few weeks for these preliminary discussions. The date of the Chancellor's visit is not yet set but it will be soon and



we must therefore move quickly to get the preparatory work underway. Adam's office will be making the arrangements for these bilaterals and it would be helpful if you would let his office know by return who will be the contact point for your party.

The Chancellor hopes to announce the results of these discussions by way of an economic initiative at a later stage in the Talks process.

There will be a further benefit in these discussions. You will be aware that Adam has recently announced his intention to undertake a fundamental review of Northern Ireland's economic development strategy. These bilaterals will therefore also provide him with a very useful opportunity to brief you on the background to this initiative and how it is to be taken forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marjorie Mowlam".

MARJORIE MOWLAM