



CAMBRIDGE CONSUMERS' COUNCIL

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City of Cambridge

Paul J. Schlaver
Executive Director

Serving the
residents of:

Cambridge

TO: Robert W. Healy, City Manager
FROM: Paul J. Schlaver, Executive Director
THROUGH: Benjamin Barnes, License Commission Chair
DATE: February 20, 2002

RE: Council Order #4, dated 2/11/02 RE: report on working with the DTE to develop a system that identifies low income consumers who may be eligible to receive electric, gas and telephone utility discount rates.

The DTE already mandates that the utility companies that fall under their regulatory authority conduct outreach campaigns to inform their customers of the possible discounts available to them. The "bill stuffers" and other forms of outreach are reviewed by the DTE. Attached please find a "bill stuffer" I just received this week from NSTAR. The application procedure has been made very simply for customers. Documentation is not required directly from the customer but sought by the utility company and provided by the particular agency determining eligibility for various low-income benefits once the customer has given NSTAR (in this case) permission to seek the verification.

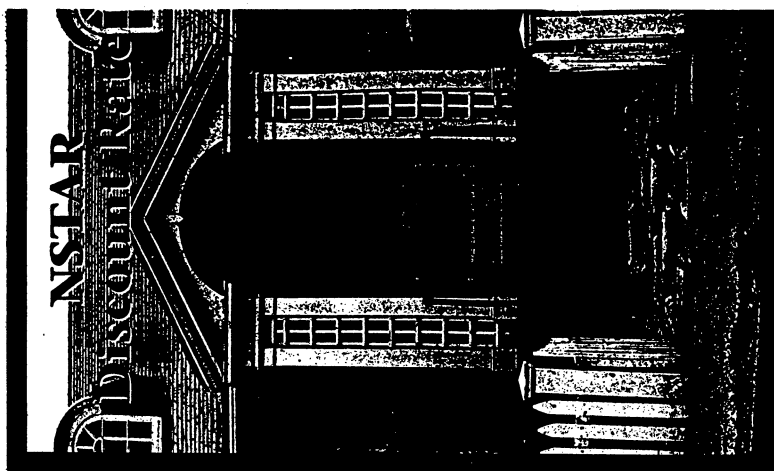
For many years various governmental programs for low-income residents have included permission to share such information with utility companies directly when the resident applied for the program, such as fuel assistance, food stamps, etc. Therefore, the eligibility is assertively passed on to the utility company and the discount rate immediately begins especially when gas or electric heat is involved. There is no burden on the resident at all to return a card such as this one.

The Fuel Assistance Program run by the Human Services Department does its very best to make sure all program recipients obtain the maximum discounts available. That staff is even on the lookout for good candidates for telephone discounts such as Lifeline rates, with seniors applying for fuel assistance. I am confident that our Council on Aging and the other agencies serving the elderly in particular makes discount eligibility an outreach priority.

Therefore, the identification process is certainly already in place by virtue of eligibility for any program as listed on the attachment and the utility companies have been consistently monitored by the DTE to make easy enrollment by their customers possible. The city can continue to encourage any of its departments or their colleagues at non-profit agencies serving this low-income population to maintain their outreach campaigns to make sure all eligible Cambridge residents are properly enroll in the available discount programs.

attachment

Working in cooperation with the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office



BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST-CLASS PERMIT NO.1 NORWOOD MA

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

CUSTOMER CARE
DEPT NW-200
NSTAR
ONE NSTAR WAY
WESTWOOD, MA 02090-9909

NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY IF
MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES



**You may be eligible
for our Discount Rate
if you are eligible for
fuel assistance or
receive one of the
benefits listed inside
and your NSTAR bill
is in your name.**

**Your household
income must also
meet eligibility
requirements.**

NSTAR DISCOUNT RATE APPLICATION

(Please complete and return to NSTAR)

Name (Please Print) _____

(_____) _____
Telephone Number

Street Address _____ Unit _____

City/Town _____ Zip Code _____

Account Number _____

(NSTAR Electric) _____

(NSTAR Gas) _____

Social Security Number _____

If you are eligible for fuel assistance or receive any of the following benefits,
you may be eligible for NSTAR's Discount Rate.

I receive a benefit under the following programs (please check):

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Supplemental Social Security Income | ☐ Head Start (<i>Eligibility letter required</i>) |
| ☐ Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) | ☐ National School Lunch or Breakfast Program (<i>Eligibility letter required</i>) |
| ☐ Emergency Aid to Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC) | ☐ Mass Veterans Benefits (GLC. 115) (<i>Non-Service Connected Disability letter required</i>) |
| ☐ Food Stamps | ☐ Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DEC) for Surviving Parents of Veterans (<i>Dependency Indemnity Compensation letter required</i>) |
| ☐ Refugee Resettlement Benefits | ☐ Improved Veterans Disability Pension (<i>Non-Service Connected Disability letter required</i>) |
| ☐ Mass Health Basic and Standard (formerly Medicaid) | |
| ☐ Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) (Fuel Assistance) | |

I certify each of the following to be true. I receive assistance benefits under program(s) checked above. I receive an NSTAR bill in my name. I authorize the agency responsible for benefit(s) being received to release information on this application to NSTAR. I authorize the administrator of the program checked above to notify the company in the event that my benefits are terminated. I also understand that I am required to notify NSTAR if my benefits end.

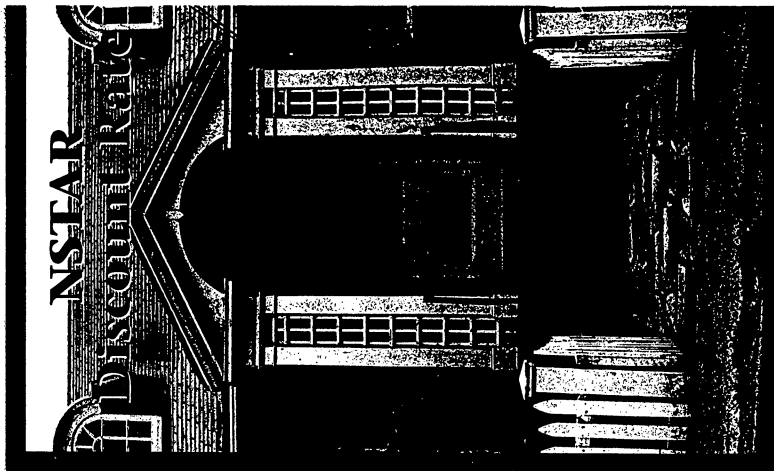
Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

This program is offered by NSTAR. Once your eligibility is verified, a "residential assistance" rate code will appear on your bill. You will be eligible to receive this discount for one year, and must renew your eligibility annually.

Energy Efficiency Program for Discount Rate Customers

- ☐ Customers receiving NSTAR's Discount Rate are eligible for a free home energy consultation. This consultation may include the installation of conservation measures and refrigerator metering. If you qualify and would like more information, please check the box to the left and a representative will contact you.

Questions? Call 1-800-566-2080 or visit us at www.nstaronline.com



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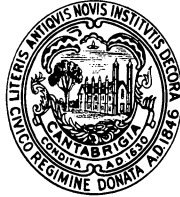
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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Robert W. Healy, City Manager

Richard C. Rossi, Deputy City Manager

February 25, 2002

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 02-12, regarding working with the Department of Telecommunications and Energy to develop a system that identifies low income consumers who may be eligible to receive electric, gas and telephone utility discount rates, received from Executive Director of the Consumers' Council Paul Schlaver.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment

S-52

Consent Agenda #7

Awaiting Report Item Number 02-12, regarding working with DTE to develop a system that identifies low-income consumers who may be eligible to receive electric, gas and telephone utility discount rates.

In City Council February 25, 2002

PLACED ON FILE