CABINET BUDGET DEBATE:
CONFLICTING PRIORITIES

The Great Cabinet Debate
As you know, the Cabinet consists of a group of elected politicians who help the prime minister make decisions and govern the nation. Imagine that you are a member of the Cabinet of Prime Minister Wannabe, and select a classmate to play the prime minister.

As a member of the Cabinet, you have been called to a meeting to help determine on what programs public money should be spent. There is only one billion dollars available, but there are many programs which various groups want to see implemented. Your task is to argue for those programs which you feel are most important to the country.

Begin by ranking your priorities on your own. Then as a Cabinet come to an overall decision on program priority. Remember when the decision is taken, all are expected to support it. This is called Cabinet solidarity. If you cannot support the Cabinet decision, it is expected that you resign.

Proposal 1. Farm Aid
Cost: $200 million
This money will be provided to hog and grain farmers to help them purchase machinery, fertilizer, chemicals, and to pay off loans. The plan would support family farms and preserve rural communities. This aid would offset losses farmers and their families have suffered as incomes have dropped due to low prices for their products.

Proposal 2. Shelters for Homeless
Cost: $300 million
Canada faces a homelessness crisis in its major cities. Funds are urgently required to build and staff emergency shelters to accommodate the increasing numbers of homeless people in Canada. Several charities and municipal governments that require immediate assistance would be directly funded.

Proposal 3. Research and Development
Cost: $250 million
Canada needs to stay on the cutting edge of high technology if it wants to prosper in the competitive global economy. Canada has not focussed enough in this area in the past, but now hopes to protect future jobs and attract foreign investment by becoming one of the leading knowledge-based economies in the world.

Proposal 4. Job Creation for Youth
Cost: $400 million
Youth unemployment is high in Canada and it is more critical than ever that young people get off to a good start in their careers. Many students are faced with the burden of paying back costly student loans borrowed for their college and university education, so employment opportunities and a reasonable level of income are critical to their future.

Proposal 5. Peacekeeping Forces
Cost: $500 million
In a restless and divided world, Canada is often called upon to send peacekeepers to wartorn regions, and in so doing, our troops have gained international respect. Their skills and experience make them vital in maintaining the peace, and in turn, saving lives.

Proposal 6. Debt Reduction
Cost: $300 million
Many Canadians desperately wish to decrease the huge amount of debt which the nation carries. This would be the first step in attaining fiscal responsibility. Business owners are particularly keen to see Canada get its financial house in order.

Proposal 7. Tax Reduction
Cost $250 million
Many Canadians feel they are highly overtaxed and would love to see a reduction in the taxes they pay. This would be very popular with most voters.