Jesse Flis

Educator, community activist, Member of Parliament











on of Polish immigrants, Jesse Flis, having earned a Master of Education degree from the University of Toronto, worked in the Toronto Board of Education as teacher, principal, consultant and coordinator of special education. In 1970, he became a founding member of the Wladyslaw Reymont Foundation of Canada, named for the Nobel Prize-winning Polish author. While on a sabbatical leave to study educational methods in Central Europe, he collected archival material for the foundation, including Reymont's letters.

Flis entered politics in the late 1970s, serving as Member of Parliament for Parkdale Riding in Toronto in the years 1979-1984 and 1988-1997. As an MP, he founded the Polish Emergency Committee of Canadian Parliamentarians to address the imposition of martial law and the suppression of the Solidarity movement by the communist government in Poland, and repeatedly pressed the Mulroney government to expedite the admission of self-exiled refugees from Poland. He helped found the Canada Poland Parliamentary Friendship Group, which remains active up to this day. Flis served as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport and to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Though now retired, Jesse Flis remains active, serving on the Government Relations Committee of the Toronto Community Living Program, the OMNI Television Advisory Board, the executive board of the Canadian Polish Congress (working to support Polish studies at the University of Toronto), and of the Cardinal Wyszynski Council of the Knights of Columbus. He also chairs the board of the Copernicus Lodge seniors' home in Toronto.

He received many distinctions, including the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit from the government of Poland, the Order of Lithuania from the government of Lithuania, and the Gold Award of Distinction from The Canadian Polish Congress. He is an honorary life member of several Polish Canadian organizations, including the Association of Polish Engineers in Canada.

Photos from top left clockwise:

Other photos – private archives

[•] Jesse Flis / Photo – Yarek Dabrowski, *punkt.ca* • J. Flis with President of Lithuania, Vytautas Lansbergis, 1990 ● J. Flis with His Holiness, the Dalai Lama / Photo – J. M. Carrise Photo ● J. Flis with Archbishop Szczepan Wesoly in Toronto • J. Flis with Canadian Frank Klees, MPP for the riding of Newmarket-Aurora / Photo – Pierre Bacler