

Albert Francis Fiorino, KC*HS, MA, MEd, PhL, PhD
Founder and Director, Metamode Institute on Public Policy

Metamode Institute on Public Policy, Toronto, Canada



Albert Francis Fiorino is a Canadian educator and the founder of the Metamode Institute on Public Policy, a Toronto-based think tank. He is a native of Grimaldi, Cosenza, Italy, where he grew up as a young boy before immigrating to Canada with his family. He continued his formative and high school education in Lethbridge, Alberta where the Fiorino family settled. He considered entering the priesthood and after graduation he went on to study philosophy and theology at St. Joseph's Seminary (now part of the University of Newman Theological College) in Edmonton, Alberta, where he was first exposed to the writings of Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Soren Kierkegaard, Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, thinkers who

were to have a significant influence on his intellectual development.

Having realized that the priesthood was not for him, he decided to continue his philosophical studies at the University of Ottawa, where he obtained graduate degrees in both philosophy and education. During this period he read widely in both of these areas, focusing his efforts during the latter years of his graduate studies on Thomistic existentialism, culminating in the writing of a graduate thesis on the notion of intuition developed by the well known Anglican scholar Dr. Eric Lionel Mascall. It was also during this period that he had the opportunity to study under Dr. William E. Carlo, whose interpretation of Aquinas' thought was to leave a lasting impression on him, especially his views on the instrumentality of conceptual knowledge and on the primacy of *esse* in metaphysics.

After three years of teaching at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Ottawa, Dr. Fiorino went on to the University of Toronto to complete his postgraduate studies in educational theory. The focus of his dissertation was the intellectual sources and roots of Egerton Ryerson's views on education and of the educational system that he established in Ontario. His research gave him an opportunity to examine the ideas of such thinkers as John Locke, John Wesley, Adam Clarke, William Paley, Sir William Blackstone, Richard Watson, Isaac Watts, individuals whose ideas greatly contributed to the cultural development of nineteenth century Canada.

Dr. Fiorino was later to do a postdoctoral fellowship program at the University of Toronto in the area of organization theory in its Faculty of Management Studies (now the Rotman School of Management). This program gave him an opportunity to apply his previous studies in philosophy, education, and theology to the area of organization behaviour and decision making theory. Many of his ideas relating to the development of an institute on public policy were born during this period and were influenced significantly by the writings of social psychologist Chris Argyris and Nobel Laureate in Economics Herbert Simon.

Over the years, Dr. Fiorino had the opportunity to teach at several universities including the University of Ottawa, Memorial University and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Perhaps the most influential point in his life came during his stay in Pakistan where he taught at the Notre Dame Institute of Education in Karachi. He was there accompanying his wife Eleanor, who was working on a project sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and co-implemented by McMaster University and the Aga Khan University. It was during his stay in Pakistan that he was exposed to Islam, and in particular to Sufism. The key tenets of this tradition, focusing on the commonality of the religious experience in human beings and of the common quest that all men and women share, affirmed his own beliefs about the universality of the human condition. It also underscored for him the need to engage in our times in the kind of thinking that would seek to raise the conduct of public policy to a new level of analysis and deliberation and to give it a new end and motive.

Upon his return from Karachi in 1996, he began exploring the possibility of establishing a public policy forum to deal with ways by which to bring about positive change in the human condition. The result was the founding the Metamode Institute on Public Policy, which held its first discussion meeting in the autumn of 1997 in the Board Room of St. Michael's College at the University of Toronto.

Over the years, the forum featured numerous well known speakers including such notables as Dr. John E. Silvia (presently Chief Economist of Wells Fargo and a Former Chief Economist of the United States Senate), Dr. Michael A. Stephen (Author and Former Chair of Aetna International), Claude Garcia (Former President of Standard Life Assurance Company), the Honourable Peter Van Loan, PC, MP (Leader of the Government in Canada's House of Commons), Dr. Samuel Gregg (Acton Institute), Anthony Westell (Journalist), and Dr. William D. Gairdner (Olympic Athlete, Author).

On September 22, 2002, he was invested in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem at St. Michael's Cathedral in Toronto. The Order is one of the oldest papal orders dating its origins back to the 11th century. The late His Eminence Aloysius Matthew Cardinal Ambrosic officiated at the investiture ceremony.

In 2007 he was promoted to the rank of Knight Commander, and in 2011 he was promoted to Knight Commander with Star. For several years during this period, he also was a member of the Toronto Lieutenancy's Council, serving in the role of Master of Ceremonies from 2007 to 2010.

Public Policy Background

Dr. Fiorino has over twenty-five years of experience in the field of public policy acquired by way of his extensive community and political involvement. What follows tries to document the salient points of this involvement and does not include an account of the numerous meetings, workshops, policy conferences at which he participated, the informal input he has had over the years, not to mention the influence he has exerted via the work and releases of the Metamode Institute.

For several years he was a member of the executive of the old Etobicoke Business Association (EBA). In this role, he was a key player in directing the process and in drafting the document which set the train in

motion for the establishment of the Etobicoke Chamber of Commerce. He also served terms on both the Etobicoke Library Board and on the Board of Directors of the Rexdale Community Legal Clinic.

During a period spanning almost twenty years, he occupied different positions on the executive of several local provincial and federal riding associations of both the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party. In these roles, he was directly involved in the public policy process of the parties, particularly through the Policy Advisory Councils (PACs) of the Ontario PC Party. Moreover, for several years he was also a member of the Executive of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Business Association (PCBA).

Most notably he also directly contributed to developments which led to the formation of the Conservative Party of Canada through his writings, correspondence, and participation in two important initiatives: the Building Bridges GTA Workshop and The National Blue Committee (formed by Bob Dechert, MP, in 1994—presently Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable John Baird, PC, MP).

This extensive background was deepened by his personal participation in the campaigns of numerous candidates in their election bids to win a seat on the local City Council, the Ontario Legislature or Canada's Parliament. This included being Policy Chair for Etobicoke North for the 1997 successful mayoralty campaign of Mel Lastman.

In the field of education, his background was further enhanced by his intimate knowledge of educational issues obtained through his many years of teaching at all educational levels, his work on the Ontario Commission on Declining School Enrolments, and through his extensive study of Ontario's educational system.

Finally, as alluded to earlier, his stay in Pakistan and his personal study of the *Qur'an* and Islam give him a special and unique perspective on public policy issues relating to the geo-political dynamics of that part of the world. This background has also broadened his appreciation of the challenges posed by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Writings

In addition to being a principal contributor to the Metamode Institute's public policy releases, he is the author of several articles and Commission studies in the field of education. He is also the principal author and editor of four Institute publications: *Shifting Gears: Transforming Public Policy* (2007), *Cut to the Chase: Reinventing Public Education* (2007), *Capitalism and Democracy Revisited* (2008), and *Voice of One* (2008).