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Office of Senator Mary Coyle

Mary Robinson Urges Canada to Meet the Climate Crisis with Urgency and Hope

Ottawa visit brings parliamentarians, students and climate leaders together ahead of COP31

OTTAWA, November 6, 2026 – The damage caused by climate change is mounting, but the choices countries make now still matter. That was the message former President of Ireland Mary Robinson brought to Ottawa this week, urging Canadians to confront the seriousness of the crisis and pursue solutions, even when the path forward is difficult.

A former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Special Envoy on Climate Change, Robinson draws on her experience in human rights to put people at the centre of climate action. She continues that work as a member and former chair of The Elders and as co-founder of Project Dandelion, a women-led global campaign for climate justice.

Senator Mary Coyle of Nova Scotia and Senator Tracy Muggli of Saskatchewan, co-chairs of Senators for Climate Solutions, hosted Robinson for discussions with parliamentarians, students and climate leaders. With Budget 2026 just tabled and COP31 approaching, the visit put a pressing question before participants: how can Canada turn its resources, knowledge and international partnerships into meaningful climate action?

Robinson grounded those conversations in what climate change means for people's homes, health, livelihoods and futures. She spoke candidly about the consequences of delayed action while emphasizing the opportunities to accelerate the clean energy transition and strengthen cooperation between Canada and Europe following the recent Canada–European Union Summit.

At Carleton University, students and faculty from Carleton and the University of Ottawa exchanged perspectives with Robinson on the climate crisis and the work ahead. At the National Arts Centre, a discussion co-hosted by the Canadian Climate Institute, the Pearson Centre and Senators for Climate Solutions brought parliamentarians together to explore climate risks, clean energy pathways and the leadership needed to act.

Robinson carried that message to GreenPAC's Breakfast on the Hill and to meetings with the Speaker of the Senate, Senator Raymonde Gagné, and Minister Julie Dabrusin.

Irish Ambassador to Canada, John Concannon, hosted a luncheon in Robinson's honour with fellow ambassadors and parliamentarians. The visit concluded with a private meeting and luncheon with Her Excellency the Right Honourable Louise Arbour, Governor General of Canada, attended by Robinson and Senators Coyle and Muggli.

Across these conversations, Robinson's message was both realistic and hopeful: the scale of the climate crisis demands that we act, and every step toward a safer, fairer, more prosperous future matters.

Media interviews

Hear more from Robinson in The Energy Mix and CBC's Ottawa Morning with Rebecca Zandbergen.

Quotes

"We are still underestimating the seriousness of the climate and nature crisis. Every country can do more, to say the least, but it is a good time to be in Canada, and there has been a welcome in Europe for the Canada-EU coming together. The meeting in Montreal last week signaled an awareness of the seriousness of the climate issue, and both Canada and Europe can step up and give leadership on climate in an alliance of mid-level states."

— Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and former UN Special Envoy on Climate Change

"Mary Robinson's visit was very timely and helpful in both elevating and informing our national conversation on climate. Our strengthening relationship with Europe should benefit all parties as we seek to decarbonize our economies."

— The Honourable Mary Coyle, Independent Senator for Nova Scotia and co-chair of Senators for Climate Solutions

"These past few days spent with President Robinson have been both enlightening and inspiring. It has been encouraging to hear the commitment of young leaders, civil society organizations, parliamentarians, and government representatives to bring climate progress back to the forefront of government priorities.

President Robinson's experience and collaborative approach reminds us that progress is achievable through collective action and that the environment is interconnected with human rights, justice, and health.

As climate related events increase in intensity and frequency, it's important that Canada do its part to contribute to practical climate solutions and meet our net-zero commitments, while working with other middle powers to encourage one another, show leadership, and make meaningful progress."

— The Honourable Tracy Muggli, Senator for Saskatchewan and co-chair of Senators for Climate Solutions

"Mary Robinson's visit came at a time when we needed her message the most. We were honoured to host her at this year's GreenPAC Breakfast on the Hill, where she reminded us of the seriousness of the climate crisis, and what it will take to protect our planet. Her words left us inspired and more determined to keep working together for a better future."

— Leticia (Ama) Deawuo, Executive Director of Environment Leadership Canada and GreenPAC

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