

## Special push for change

By Cornelia Naylor, The Times August 21, 2012 6:48 AM



**Chilliwack Elks Jerry Wernicke and Ron Molnar (left and second from left) look on as Mayor Sharon Gaetz chats with Joe Roberts (right) who is pushing a shopping cart from Calgary to Vancouver to raise money for homeless youth.**

**Photograph by: Cornelia Naylor , TIMES**

A former homeless man who is pushing a shopping cart from Calgary to Vancouver to raise money for homeless youth made a stop in Chilliwack Thursday.

Twenty-three years ago, Joe Roberts was homeless and living under a bridge on Vancouver's Downtown East Side. Today he is an author, trainer, consultant and internationally sought-after professional speaker who shares his story to give hope and inspiration to audiences worldwide.

His trek from Calgary to Vancouver, which will end on the Downtown East Side, is actually a pilot for a full-scale cross-Canada tour scheduled to start from St. John's, Nfld on May 1, 2013.

Dubbed The Push for Change, the trek is looking to raise money for at-risk kids to keep them from making the same bad choices Roberts made as a youngster. His pilot tour started July 1 in Calgary and reached the 1,000-kilometre mark near Chilliwack.

Pushing a modified Chariot baby stroller-turned-shopping-cart, Roberts travels about 24 kilometres a day.

The biggest challenge, he said, has been the stretches of highway with no shoulder.

"Parts of Manning Park were pretty sketchy," he told the Times. "Not only did I not have a shoulder, I also had logging trucks coming at me down around eight per cent grades into blind corners at 6: 30 in the morning."

In Chilliwack, Roberts first met with Mayor Sharon Gaetz at City Hall and then with Chilliwack-Hope MLA Gwen O'Mahony at the Elks Lodge 48.

The Elks of Canada and the Salvation Army are major sponsors of the trek as are Cloverdale Paints and Telus.

The Push for Change organizers aren't looking to reinvent the wheel, said Roberts Thursday, but to support already-effective programs that are threatened by unreliable funding. "There's tons of programs, and they'll get funded for a while and then they won't, and they're great programs," he said.

Push For Change is also looking to develop a mentorship program to steer at risk youth away from lives of addiction and homelessness.

Visit [www.thepushforchange.com](http://www.thepushforchange.com).

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