

Vancouver Man Passing Through In Effort To End Homelessness

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Photo courtesy of thepushforchange.com. By [Adelle Loiselle](#) November 21, 2016 11:48am

Joe Roberts knows what it is like to be homeless.

For a time in 1989, he was living on the streets of Vancouver.

“My father died very young, and my stepfather was an unsupportive, abusive alcoholic, and I found myself at 15 simply not being able to be at home anymore,” he says. “I continued to struggle with mental health and addiction until I was finally chronically homeless, living on the streets of Vancouver collecting cans and bottles with a shopping cart.”

Luckily for Roberts, he had champions in his mother and an OPP officer.

“They gave me the stepping stones to enter drug treatment, go back to college and graduate and go out into the business world,” he says.

Before he turned 35, he was named one of Business Vancouver’s 40 Under 40 and one of Mclean’s magazine’s Ten Canadians Who Makes A Difference.

These days, Roberts is pushing a grocery cart across Canada in his Push For Change to raise awareness and money to fight homelessness.

So, how does Roberts envision Canada ending homelessness?

Get to at-risk kids before they quit school.

“What needs to be done is a deeper investment in prevention, while supporting emergency services and looking at housing first initiatives,” he says.

“I like to use the metaphor that if you went home today and your basement was filled with water, you wouldn’t spend the next year mopping water,” Roberts says. “You’d find the leak. You’d stop the leak and then you would clean up.”

For some reason, in Canada and the United States and across the developed world, we focus our time and energy on crisis.”

“I am a community investment gone correct,” concludes Roberts.

Since starting his expedition on May 1 in St. John’s Newfoundland, Roberts has met with politicians and ordinary Canadians. He hopes to finish in Vancouver September 29, 2017.

So far, approximately \$270,000 has been raised for homelessness initiatives. The goal is \$0.50 per Canadian, or \$17.5-million.

He arrives at the South Essex Community Council in Leamington at 5pm Tuesday, November 22, and in Windsor the following day.

Everyone is invited to join Roberts for the last 5 km of his walk into the city where he will arrive at Charles Clark Square between 12:30pm and 1pm. There will be a rally to mark his arrival to Windsor.

On Thursday, November 24 Roberts will share his story with area school children at the Caboto Club at 10am.



Photo courtesy of thepushforchange.org.