


# Homeless awareness boosted by man pushing a shopping cart

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Craig Pearson, Windsor Star

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A shopping card can hold a lot for a homeless person.

This week, it holds hope.

Anti-homeless crusader Joe Roberts — who's pushing a shopping cart 9,000 kilometres from St. John's, NL, to Vancouver to raise awareness about homelessness — rolled into Windsor from Kingsville Wednesday for a five-kilometre walk downtown and a rally at Charles Clark Square.

More than 100 people — including 24 Grade 7 students from Dougall Public School — braved drizzling rain in cold temperatures to hear his call for action as part of his Push For Change campaign.

“One of the things I find interesting walking across Canada is we get to experience all kinds of weather,” Roberts told the crowd. “And being a person who was once homeless on the streets, I know you don't get to pick your sunshine, you don't get to pick your weather.”

Roberts said he ended up escaping homelessness, and went on to become a successful businessman, because of his mother and a police officer who never gave up on him.

“What keeps me awake at night is knowing how many people like me are out there right now, who have the same potential, and all they need is one champion, that one person to say I believe in you,” he said.

Roberts is spending Days 206 through 208 in the area, including talking to students Thursday, on a journey expected to take 517 days.

Angela Yakonich, community developer for the Homeless Coalition of Windsor and Essex County, felt Roberts's stop in Windsor did wonders.

“The response we're seeing is incredible,” Yakonich said, noting that she has been inundated with emails and that the group's social media pages have erupted with people making enquiries. “Joe had originally planned not to come to Windsor. They were going to just go to London.

“But they decided to come here and they added about 700 kilometres to their trip to do it. And we're so grateful they came.”

Yakonich estimates that roughly one per cent of Windsor's population is homeless, a result of many things, such as family strife, mental health issues, addiction, bullying and poverty.

Local Push for Change donations hadn't been tabulated by Wednesday evening, but four corporate sponsors alone gave a total of \$4,000, and joined Roberts for a five-kilometre shopping-cart walk around downtown, complete with police escort.

Tamara Kowalska, the executive director of the Windsor Youth Centre, a drop-in centre that provides hot meals for

young people with nowhere to go, said her organization sees 300 new faces a year.

“Without a home we can’t move forward in our lives,” she said. “We can’t recover from hardship that has already happened in our lives. We have no grounding.

“It’s very difficult.”

For more information visit [Thepushforchange.com](http://Thepushforchange.com) or visit the Homeless Coalition of Windsor and Essex County at [hcwe.ca](http://hcwe.ca).

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Joe Roberts makes a stop at Charles Clark Square in Windsor on Nov. 23, 2016. Tyler Brownbridge / Windsor Star



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