

# Push for Change's Joe Roberts receives hero's welcome in Caledon

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## The Push For Change



Lisa Rutledge, Times Staff

*Push for Change.*

Caledon Enterprise

By [Ross Andersen](#)/Special to The Enterprise

Pushing a modified shopping cart, Joe Roberts was given a hero's welcome by the Town, OPP and students at Robert F. Hall Catholic Secondary School as he made his way through Caledon on Dec. 22 on a cross-country journey raising awareness about youth homelessness in Canada.



The former drug addicted homeless man turned entrepreneur and founder of the Push for Change movement, is advocating for youth homelessness as he pushes a modified baby carriage – meant to symbolize a shopping cart and homelessness – across the country.

“Pushing a symbol of chronic homelessness across the country allows me to bring attention to what is a Canadian epidemic,” said Roberts, who began his mission across Canada in St. John’s, Newfoundland and has pushed more than 4,311 km. He plans to end his journey in Vancouver, British Columbia, having walked a total of 9,000 km across the nation.

“Joe is a man who can provide solutions, and people like him are important to have in communities – to get behind the ones who make things happen,” said Mayor Allan Thompson.

Inspired by the likes of Terry Fox and Rick Hansen, Roberts has a legacy of his own in mind.

His ultimate goal is to raise money and put an end to youth homelessness across Canada. With dozens of sponsors such as the Wayne Gretzky foundation covering operation costs, 100 per cent of funds raised will be invested in The Upstream Project, a youth homeless prevention campaign.

“Telling my story in a transparent way allows me to take action in the face of emotional uncertainty,” he said.

In 1989, Roberts lived under a bridge in Vancouver, addicted to drugs and was suicidal – until he turned his life around through the encouragement of a police officer and his mother.

“I was told my worth, and that was the first time anyone had told me I had potential,” he added.

Roberts’ explained that his advice to those who are living on the street, is despite circumstances, there is more to youth than anybody can see. He wants to invite the Canadian population to discuss how we can better the lives of those who are most vulnerable.

According to [Covenant House](#) – Canada’s largest youth homeless agency – there are 35,000 youth every year without a place to call home.

It is estimated the mortality rate of homeless youth is up to 40 times the mortality rate of housed youth, with primary causes of death identified as suicide and drug overdose, according to Covenant House’s website.

Roberts’ estimated arrival date in Vancouver is some time in September of 2017, where he will then continue to advocate for the cause.

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