

Joe Roberts is pushing to change youth homelessness in Tottenham and across Canada

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News

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Push for Change Tottenham | Supplied photo

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Joe Roberts has been spreading awareness and raising money to help end youth homelessness across Canada through his Push for Change campaign, and he recently spread his message at a school in Tottenham.

The Barrie man started his 9,000 km cross-Canada challenge in May. He aims to raise \$17 million and has raised about \$350,000 so far.

Roberts says his message resonates very well in smaller communities such as Tottenham, but warns they shouldn't think these problems don't exist because they aren't as visible there.

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"There's this notion that we don't have this problem in Tottenham or Orangeville, but youth at risk are in every corner of every community in the country," he said.

When Roberts talks in schools, like he did at St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Secondary School in Tottenham on Dec. 22, he talks about changing attitudes and a need to understand the root cause of issues.

"We need to understand the issues in this country that lead to the phenomenon that is homelessness," he said. "We

have to stop judging it and start treating it.”

The Government of Canada estimates the country’s total homeless population is somewhere around 150,000, but non-governmental agencies say it could be as high as 300,000.

Money collected by the Push for Change campaign will be used with the aim of preventing youth homelessness altogether. In partnership with other charities and organizations, Push for Change will fund a program called the Upstream Project, an in-school program that develops strategies to help at-risk youth. Push for Change also advocates for better sustainable housing and better emergency services to help at-risk youth.

Roberts was in Barrie on Dec. 27 and will continue his journey across Canada, with his trek scheduled to end in Vancouver in 2017.

For more information or to donate, visit thepushforchange.com.