

# Gore Street closes for shopping cart races, special speakers (3 photos)

---

 [sootoday.com/local-news/gore-street-closes-for-shopping-cart-races-special-speakers-3-photos-525589](https://sootoday.com/local-news/gore-street-closes-for-shopping-cart-races-special-speakers-3-photos-525589)

Darren Taylor

Sault Ste. Marie officially welcomed Joe Roberts and his Push for Change campaign Wednesday.

As reported [earlier](#) by SooToday, Roberts went from being a homeless man, pushing a shopping cart on the streets of Vancouver, to being a successful entrepreneur.

He is now pushing a shopping cart across Canada to raise funds and awareness of homelessness in his Push for Change campaign.

“You can get involved locally (to help the homeless get off the streets),” Roberts told an enthusiastic crowd gathered on Gore Street, which was closed to vehicular traffic while several local sponsoring groups took part in shopping cart races Wednesday afternoon.

Half the funds raised by local sponsors and individuals for Roberts Push for Change campaign go to the Upstream Project, a youth-based homelessness initiative, the other half to Pauline’s Place, a local shelter for troubled youth.

“You can connect with Pauline’s Place and you can ask how you can continue to support them with your time, your treasure and your talent, you can help support Push for Change (through its website and social media)...you can write a letter to your Member of Parliament and let them know that you want to see the federal and provincial governments make serious commitments to change,” Roberts said in a speech.

“We need to continue to put the (homelessness) conversation out there,” he urged the audience, acknowledging the presence and support of Mayor Christian Provenzano, several city councillors and officials from many social service agencies.

“I think the key is working on prevention...helping young people, giving them the services and supports they need before they end up homeless.”

Wednesday marked Day 278 of Roberts cross-Canada trek.

The Sault’s John Farrell told his own story as a former homeless man to Wednesday’s audience.

Farrell agreed with Roberts it is vital to understand there are many reasons why people become homeless, and that it is possible for them to get their lives back on track through their own initiative, coupled with community support.

“The key is don’t ignore homeless people, don’t judge them,” Farrell told SooToday.

“I’ve seen hundreds of us, homeless youth...people think of us as dangerous, angry and as nothing more than criminals.”

“We find our names mentioned in the media sometimes for what we’ve done (crimes such as theft), sometimes those things were done because we were starving, we were cold...you never know the actual reason for why someone does something (illegal).”

“If we could bring more help to these people (such as support for homeless shelters and other social services), you would see less of that kind of crime,” Farrell said.

Farrell, now 25, was homeless at 16.

Farrell said despite having a good, supportive home, he suffered from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which caused him to be ostracized at school.

“I became a very angry person at the time, always fighting with my parents.”

Farrell left home after an argument with his family and ended up sleeping behind the dumpsters at the Mac’s Convenience Store on Gore Street for several cold December nights in 2009.

During those few days he became addicted to cocaine.

“Even after finding my way to Pauline’s Place I was still addicted, I was hiding it, and to get the money for drugs I stole from family, from friends, I shoplifted.”

Farrell, through his own resolve, got off cocaine.

“I’ve been clean for seven years,” Farrell said, adding he is on good terms with his family and credits them for their support.

He also credits workers from Pauline’s Place with helping him find his own apartment at 17.

“They helped me with work, they helped me with food...they were completely supportive of me.”

“I now have a good job (with a construction company), my own car, I have a roof over my head,” Farrell beamed.

He has also completed his secondary school education and hopes to study at Sault College.

“I want to be a social worker, to give back to the people who gave me so much.”

“Joe Roberts is a magnificent inspiration to me,” Farrell added.

Roberts arrived in the Sault Tuesday, and after travelling to Regina for a conference, will return to the Sault to meet with students Feb. 10 before resuming his cross-Canada journey.

Local organizers of Wednesday’s shopping cart races hope to make the event an annual one in an ongoing effort to fight homelessness in the Sault.