

Push for change rolls into Regina with a message of hope

 [cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/shopping-cart-homelessness-regina-1.4126337](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/shopping-cart-homelessness-regina-1.4126337)

A shopping cart-pushing advocate for ending youth homelessness arrived in Regina last week with a message of hope.

Joe Roberts is walking across Canada, 24 kilometres a day, behind his symbolic shopping, the face of the national campaign, [The Push for Change](#).

On Friday, several Regina residents and city officials joined him as he made his day's haul across the city.

Before the trek, however, Roberts — who has walked more than 7,000 kilometres since leaving St. John's, NL, on May 1, 2016— had an inspiring message for the students assembled before him.

Fateful encounter on park bench

He recalled the day in 1989 when, as a young homeless person, he was seated on a park bench.

"My life was broken," he said. "I was addicted to drugs, chronically homeless. I was sitting beside this man named Gus. He had these piercing blue eyes and he looked at me and said, 'You know Joe, there's more to you than you can see.'"



Former homeless youth Joe Roberts speaks passionately about the need to end youth homeless in Regina on Friday. (CBC)

Roberts couldn't wrap his brain around that at the time.

"What was sitting in front of him that day was a guy who'd made every mistake possible: dirty matted hair, addicted to heroine, broken teeth, stink from living outside."

Prevention, housing key

Now Roberts is a passionate advocate for funding programs to end youth homelessness, speaking to students throughout his long journey, which will end in Vancouver this September.

In Regina, he spoke of the importance of not only funding emergency solutions but of pouring resources into housing

and prevention services.

His talk was followed by his walk and a community barbecue.