

# Cross-country shopping cart

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The Canadian  
Press



Photo: The Canadian Press

A man who lived on the streets of Vancouver as a teenager will push a shopping cart through the city's rough-and-tumble Downtown Eastside once again on Friday, but this time will mark the end of a cross-country journey to raise awareness about youth homelessness.

Joe Roberts, 50, began his The Push For Change campaign in Newfoundland 17 months ago to visit schools and communities to discuss the issues that lead to youth homelessness and raise funds to support prevention programs.

Having gone from a homeless teen to finding success in business and technology in a 12-year span, Roberts said he decided to leave the corporate world in the early 2000s to do workshops and help people understand why some youths end up on the street.

"I represent all the key antecedents that create the phenomena of youth homelessness in this country," he said in an interview. "I had early childhood trauma ... I had the early introduction to alcohol and drugs to deal with the emotional instability in my life. By the time I was 15, I had family conflict, which is the number one reason why kids end up homeless."

Roberts said his father died while he was growing up in Midland, Ont. He later experimented with drugs, dropped out of school, left home and headed to Vancouver.

"I was able to get that second break I needed," he said. "When I came back the second time, with some foundation

and sobriety under my belt, I succeeded beyond my wildest dreams in the business community."

Roberts said he wanted to push a shopping cart across the country as a symbol of chronic homelessness.

The Push For Change has raised over \$540,000 in addition to the sponsorships that covered the costs of the campaign. Roberts also spoke at hundreds of schools, met with mayors, police departments, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and government officials.