

'Push For Change' Reaches Chatham (GALLERY)

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Joe Roberts walking into Chatham, pushing a shopping cart in his Push for Change campaign. November 28, 2016. (Photo by Natalia Vega) By [Natalia Vega](#) November 28, 2016 11:26am

Joe Roberts is in Chatham, with the goal of raising awareness to end youth homelessness.

Starting his day at 5am in Tilbury, Roberts, who is formerly homeless, walked along Queens Line into Chatham around noon. All the while pushing a shopping cart as part of the "Push for Change" campaign.

Roberts stint in Chatham will be short, but before leaving he made sure to stop by Queen Elizabeth II Public School Monday afternoon.

During a presentation in the school's gym, Roberts spoke about his past. Having battled an addiction to drugs and alcohol, Roberts says he spent some time living on the street as a young adult, but eventually got a "second chance".

Roberts says the reason he likes speaking at schools, especially in smaller communities, is because it helps get his message across to children who are or could be at-risk.

"The best place for us to prevent homelessness is right here in these elementary schools," says Roberts.

Using Queen Elizabeth II Public School as an example, Roberts says there are some children who could become at-risk anywhere between the ages of 14 and 17.

"Out of these 350 young people, there's probably 30 or 40 that are at potential risk," says Roberts.

During his presentation, he told students how the Push for Change started. He says it all started with the desire to give back in some way, adding his friend suggested running across the country to raise money and awareness.

As a result, Roberts started the campaign walking from St. John's Newfoundland back in May.

"I think that the higher calling for a human being is to be at service to others," says Roberts.

Now, having made his way into Southwestern Ontario, Roberts says he's been getting a lot of attention — even from provincial leaders.

"We got an invitation to go and meet with the prime minister," says Roberts. "The fact that the PMO office is communicating with us and saying they would be open to meeting is extraordinary."

The Push for Change campaign has generated about \$270,000 so far but they're looking to raise more.

"We're trying to raise 50 cents from every Canadian," says Roberts. "We want to take those dollars and invest it into prevention models."

Roberts still has 5,000 km to go. He'll be leaving Chatham Tuesday afternoon to head into Sarnia.





