

# Ex-addict's hope for homeless fuels trek

By John Colebourn, The Province August 20, 2012



**Joe Roberts takes a break in Coquitlam Sunday, having pushed a shopping cart from Calgary in a trial run of his 2013 fundraiser.**

**Photograph by: Wayne Leidenfrost, PNG , The Province**

Joe Roberts wasn't sure about how to train for a trek across the country while pushing a shopping cart.

So he decided to test things out this summer by pushing the cart in a trial run from Calgary to Vancouver

"I am not an elite athlete," Roberts, 45, said Sunday in Coquitlam, nearing the end of his arduous journey, pushing the cart an average 24 kilo-metres a day.

"I'm not the usual suspect for someone who is going to push a shopping cart across the country."

Roberts, a former drug addict from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, is trying to raise awareness of homelessness through The Push for Change Foundation.

On Saturday, Roberts will push the cart into the Downtown East-side, ending the trial run for his 2013 fundraiser that aims to help kids at risk and steer them away from drug abuse and homelessness.

"We want to reach these kids before they fall through the cracks," he said. His determination to get off drugs and turn his own life around won him a Courage to Come Back Award in 2003.

"You have to go back to the root cause of what is causing these kids to sell themselves short," he said of at-risk youths.

"Some of them are one bad mistake from something really bad. You see the people who made poor choices. They have no teeth, scars on their faces and their life is in the toilet."

When his cross-country project begins next year, Roberts will be fundraising to establish programs for troubled teens.

He has been working with business partner and sports psychologist Dr. Sean Richardson, who has helped him in handling the day-to-day grind of pushing the cart in all kinds of weather.

"He has put together the entire sports package for me," he said of Richardson's help.

"Psychologically, when it is raining and miserable out, how do you stay motivated?"

Even with an assistant driving a van behind him, Roberts said there's not a lot of room on the high-

ways and pushing the cart stresses his body.

The Rogers Pass area, the Okanagan and around Hope were difficult stretches to navigate a shopping cart along the side of the road.

"It has been tough," he said of the many hills he has negotiated on the trial journey.

"Running is one thing on the road but with the cart, you need a lot more space on the road," he said.

"It startles the logging trucks."

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