


Cash from province keeps drug court going

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Darren Peterson said he was "hopeless, useless, desperate and lost" before turning to Calgary's drug-treatment court.

After 15 years behind bars, Darren Peterson said his boyhood dreams started to fade.

He had begun experimenting with drugs in his teenage years and got caught up in an unbreakable cycle of addiction.

To feed his habit, Peterson turned to crime and eventually landed in court.

“At one point, a judge told me I was a menace to society – a career criminal that if he could have his way he would lock me up and throw away the key,” Peterson said.

That’s when he turned to Calgary’s drug-treatment court. The 18-month program allows a judge to send addicts for structured rehabilitative treatment as opposed to serving jail time.

Peterson said the program saved his life. He now has a job, a spouse and a new outlook on life.

“I even got a Visa, and it actually had my name on it,” he joked.

Yesterday, the province announced it would put more than \$516,000 into the court for the coming year to allow others in Peterson’s situation the opportunity to turn their lives around.

“Offenders now have access to an integrated, individualized approach and it helps them break this cycle of drug abuse,” said Justice Minister Verlyn Olson.