

## Oakville Business Youth By Rory and Uzair

We marched along the lakeshore with an immense hope that today's the day when two youngsters would change the way business is done in Downtown Oakville. As the sun turned gloomy, and a chilly breeze ran across our face, we turned our attention to a local restaurant, which seemed approachable. Unexpectedly, the restaurant's door was closed with a flashy sign stating, "open," hung over it. Knocking at the door looked like the best option; thus, we knocked and waited for someone to attend.

A lanky man peeked from the side-window and shouted, "We open at 6!" Wasting no time, we replied, "Sir, we are here to discuss a proposal regarding climate change." He revolted back, "I don't want to hear anything, you may leave." The disgusted look on the man's face made it clear that we must reach out to someone else.

This time, with relatively lower hopes, we walked into a locally-sourced coffee-shop. The place was on fire, not in a figurative way, but literally. Thick smoke had covered the ceilings, and breathing was a scarce resource inside there. We looked around to find the manager, but he was involved in a rather exhausting task at the moment; he was fixing the coffee machine whose motor had burned out. We thought that he's not going to listen to us as his business is already emitting a lot of carbon emission.

We had learned in elementary school, "the third try is always successful." Keeping this quote in mind, we entered a furniture store; this time, a little less confident. The place was decorated with Persian carpets, Georgian-style sofas and gold-plated crockery. We knew that this place was a little out of our league, but the third time was supposed to be successful, right? We pitched to the store-manager, "Mam, climate change is an alarming issue, and we have a proposal for you?" She gave us a grim look and replied, "we don't solicit during business hours." We were bewildered by her response as her fancy shop was fully-empty with Caesar's statue looking desperate for customers in the showcase. This time, we didn't give up. We replied, "We just need two minutes of your time, and believe us, our proposal is economically and environmentally optimal." She didn't take her eyes off the screen of her computer as she was playing poker, a vital duty during business hours.

Cursing the "third try" quote, we set for another, another, and yet another business. Within just two hours, we had reached out to eighteen different places, but the replies were the same, "we don't need your help." Some considered our cons, some considered us teenagers looking for money, some considered us highschool dropouts. Personally, it was hard to visit eighteen different places, pitch our ideas, and get rejected. One starts to question its abilities, and without a doubt, hope is laid to rest in peace.

Why did we take another shot? It was the passion for the betterment of the community that pushed us to reach out to the nineteenth business. While two hours of conversations with several business owners and managers had exhausted us, it had also prepared us for delivering the perfect pitch that was effective, straight to the point, and eventually successful. We entered a local restaurant that serves Indian cuisine and let our learning from prior experience drive the conversation.

We agreed upon developing a mutually-constructed plan for the restaurant that would be followed for 2-3 months with quick implementation. We didn't let the wave of success stop, we reached out to a pizza place, making it our twentieth visit to businesses. Once again, our pitch had become convincingly effective, that it took us only five minutes to get our project approved.

By the end of the day, we had two businesses on board with us who were willing to cooperate and follow a comprehensive plan that combats climate-change, promotes corporate social responsibility, and proves that youth can do anything.

Although we were initially met with adversary, reminding ourselves that success comes to those who persevere was imperative. Although our project currently only directly works alongside two local businesses, the future is bright, for we know that climate action is contagious. While other youngsters sit around dreading what the future holds for our planet we've stood up in the hopes that we can serve as an example for youthful empowerment. To all the youngsters that care deeply about the climate crisis, but are afraid of the bureaucracy or red tape they may face in taking action, we tell you this--your voice is more powerful than ever, although it may seem daunting, all it takes is a small group of people to take the leap of faith, rest assured others will follow in support right behind you.