

climatechange

Quebec innovator on a mission to make solar power a ready option

Trading in your gas-guzzler for a hybrid vehicle is one way to make a statement about your concern for the environment, but a Quebec company aims to convince more Canadians that switching to an emission-free source of electricity offers yet another powerful way

to reduce a carbon footprint. What's more, the company says making the change is simple.

While setting up a backyard wind turbine or micro hydro power plant is out of the question and economically unfeasible for most of us, Marc Andre

Lemieux, president of Montreal-based Solart Group, believes solar energy is a realistic option for families and businesses looking for ways to reduce their carbon footprint. In the case of companies, he believes choosing solar can also add up to an important marketing advantage.

"Many homeowners who install solar panels do so to demonstrate that they are doing something to reduce their carbon footprint."

Marc Andre Lemieux, president, Solart Group

Solart's focus is on making it easy and affordable for homeowners and businesses to go solar by creating unique solar solutions with the right blend of efficiency, affordability and esthetics, says Mr. Lemieux.

He admits that solar power is not for everyone, but the market is growing.

"Many homeowners who install solar panels do so to make a statement about where they stand on the environment and to demonstrate that they are doing something to reduce their carbon footprint," he says.

But for business, there may also be a marketing advantage.

"For example, a hotel that switches to solar power can market itself to environmental conscious consumers in the same way that environmentally friendly products have an advantage in the market among consumers who want products that reflect their views on environmental

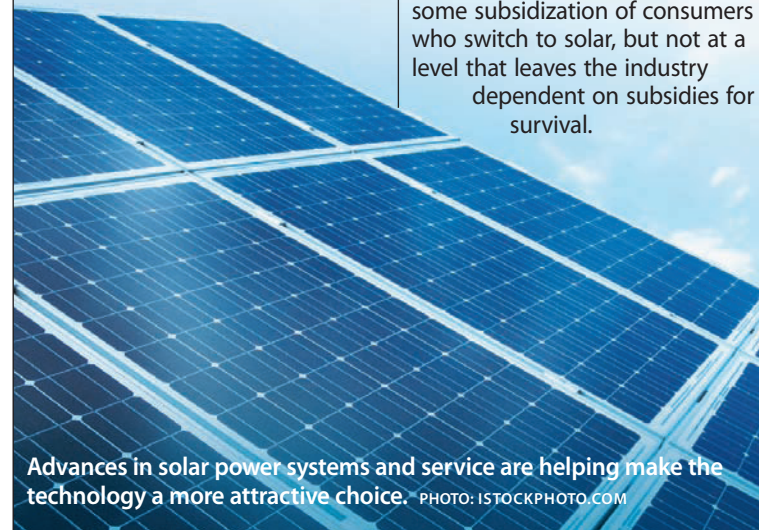
protection," adds Mr. Lemieux.

Solart's approach to solar power is to provide what it calls a one-stop shop for tailored, turnkey systems.

"Our team will evaluate, design, optimize and manage a client's system and its installation. Our clients have a personal project manager dedicated to operate and manage the life cycle of the solution, and we also offer a maintenance service including training and administrative support," says Mr. Lemieux.

This level of service, he says, provides a higher degree of comfort to clients who may be wary of a technology about which they know very little.

Promoting solar energy, says Mr. Lemieux, requires efforts by the industry to prove the value and reliability of the technology, and support by governments through the education of consumers, early adoption by governments themselves and some subsidization of consumers who switch to solar, but not at a level that leaves the industry dependent on subsidies for survival.



Advances in solar power systems and service are helping make the technology a more attractive choice. PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM