The Arguments Against Solar

By Novo Solar Systems

What exactly are the arguments against solar power? For the last 6 months Novo Solar Systems has been on a mission to provide people with as much information as possible for them to make an informed decision whether or not solar power is the right investment for them. Our blog and Novo Solar Facebook Page have informative and educational posts and links posted weekly with topics on the Energy Shift, Installations, Net Metering and more.

Now solar is not the perfect solution to our energy needs across the planet, but it is part of the solution. Why shouldn't it be when we have this giant power station beaming us energy everyday that could meet the world's energy needs many times over.

For the most part, people are open to the idea of harnessing the power of the sun and see the renewable energy industry grow and prosper. The main goal of renewable energy is to move the human race away from digging for fossil fuels that contribute to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions and not renewable. We are currently on track for 2015 to be the hottest year on record since temperature records began. Heatwaves in countries all over the world and droughts in California and other parts of the world are making headlines and have real life consequences for millions and millions of people.

So the question is, why are there so many people out there who are so adamantly opposed to trying new technologies and moving our world to one that is less reliant on hydro-carbons? We not talking about the corporations that have billions of dollars invested in the Oil Sands and fossil fuel technologies. Their bias and opposition is clearly profit driven. But what about the ordinary folks that just immediately get their hackles up and fight tooth and nail to disprove any benefits that solar power and other renewable energy sources can provide. We hear from these people on almost every Facebook post we share.

Here are some ideas we have about this group of people.

They Work in the Fossil Fuel Industry

Many people can't see the forest for the trees. If their livelihood depends on a job in the fossil fuel industry, the idea that a technology like solar or other renewable energy source may affect their ability to work can be scary. But looking at the volatile market that oil is traded on and the collusion of the large producers and cartels, the workers are vulnerable to market forces which is a bigger threat than the growth of the renewable energy industry.

As we wrote in a recent blog post, Canada is missing out on Clean Energy Economy, and a huge opportunity to capture a bigger market share of the the global clean energy market that brought in CAD$790 billion worldwide. Our share was a measly 0.9% of that, or $7 billion.

With a new focus on education and training, current petro-employees could move into this new area of renewable energy and help Canada become a world leader, instead of becoming a
energy dinosaur. This would take some serious planning from learning institutions and governments but the time to begin the move is now.

**Those Damn Environmentalists!**

There seems to be and has been for quite a while, a very vocal contingent of our population that loves to scream and shout and generally hate anyone who cares about our planet's well being and in turn, the health of all us living on our little rock in space. This is the only planet we have and it defies comprehension that when people want to take care of it by reducing our impact, both short and long term, they are bullied and harassed online and in person.

Now I do know there are many "environmentalists" who can also do the same and go to very extreme lengths to send their message, which can include harassment, violence and destruction of property. These people are an extreme, small segment and do not represent the majority. But lumping everyone into this group, when all they want is help our species carrying on being good caretakers of our planet should not be ridiculed and trolled. We should all realize that if we don't, no one else will and the ramifications of our policies and actions will massively effect our day to lives.

**Political Partisanship**

Politics is part of our democracy and in the last few decades, partisanship has become more divisive. This has to do with many factors that will not be covered in this post, but it is worth noting that when a political party gets large donations from corporations, they are now beholden to those industries and will make policy decisions based on the need to continue to receive money and support for re-election.

Currently in Canada, the Conservative Party of Canada under the leadership of Stephen Harper has an all-in approach to the fossil fuel industry. During the recent consultations with communities and "interested parties" regarding the Enbridge Gateway Pipeline, anyone who was against it was called a "Radical" by then Energy Minister Joe Oliver. (CBC News - Radicals working against the oilsands).

I am pretty sure that the majority of BC'ers and Canadians that oppose the pipeline are far from radical, but care very much about our environment and coastal marine life. If that makes us "radicals" in the governments eyes, then so be it.

So if you support Stephen Harper and the governing party and are a super partisan, you follow this propaganda and go out into the world of social media and public and shout down anyone who questions the necessity, the route, the environmental record of Enbridge and other oil and gas companies and anything else that puts this fossil fuel industry in the spotlight to answer important and valid concerns.

They also carry that thinking to other realms of energy generation. So let's delve into the arguments that get the anti-renewable energy critics in a tizzy.
Solar. It's way too expensive!

Currently, solar panels have dropped 75% in price since 2009 and continue to drop. The cost per kilowatt has now reached grid parity in BC. This means that the price of electrical energy vs photovoltaic energy is the same. Solar Grid Parity Reached in BC

Now that does not include the initial investment in the solar panel system. Currently, with Novo Solar, the cost for 10kW systems is roughly $30,000. This would take about 9-15 years to pay off at current rates. With BC Hydro set to increase 45% in the next 10 years, the payoff decreases. Change all your lights to LED and you can reduce your payoff by almost 6 years.

And many lenders are now offering loans to make your home more green. The Vancity Home Energy Loan offers loans of up to $50,000 to install a photovoltaic panel system on your home.

So you do the math.

Unfortunately Canada has put tariffs on solar panels from China since March of 2015 to protect Canadian manufacturers. The tariffs are a step backwards for solar adoption in Canada in our opinion. The reason the tariffs were imposed was due to lobbying by four manufacturers. But loss of jobs will outweigh any gains, as thousands of jobs will be lost as higher prices mean people will be less likely to adopt this burgeoning technology.

"There is Not Enough Sun" or "Too Much Rain in (insert city of choice here)"

Germany currently leads the world in PV installations. There are about 1.5 million solar panel systems in the country. Looking at Germany major cities and their total annual sunshine in hours, here are some interesting results.

**Germany**

Berlin - 1625 hours  
Hamburg - 1557 hours  
Hannover - 1501 hours

**Canada**

Vancouver - 1938 hours  
Calgary - 2396 hours  
Edmonton - 2345 hours  
Toronto - 2066 hours

So as you can see, Canadian cities have more sunshine hours and days than the global leader in solar installations.

Solar is Not Viable Without Taxpayer Subsidies

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Do you know what else gets subsidies? The Oil and Gas Industry. According to the International Energy Agency, global subsidies to the oil gas industry totalled $548 billion in 2013. With 2013 profits reaching $93 Billion for the big five oil companies. And that profit was down 27% from 2012. But just think about that number. $93 billion in profit! Why they need our money to continue business is beyond comprehension.

Now if people are fine with providing very profitable oil and gas businesses with their taxpayer money, why do the same ones get so riled up at the idea of renewable energy getting subsidies themselves to improve the technology and bring the economy of scale to the masses? Solar adoption would only improve our standard of living and help our planet stay liveable for humans. Seems like a reasonable investment.

**Mass Storage and Batteries Systems Are Expensive and Unreliable**

Battery systems are currently undergoing some major innovations with companies like Tesla Energy, who is building the Powerwall Home Battery System, going to market with solar energy storage for consumers. At the moment, the technology is still somewhat pricey and not the best option, but improvements will be made and the price will come down. With Tesla providing the technology as open source, there will undoubtably be other companies that build on these ideas. So as more early adopters use the technology, innovation will increase.

But when we mention battery systems, there are many people that don't look at it as an iteration to be improved upon as we move forward, They just say "That battery sucks". But what are they doing to help the issue? At least people like Elon Musk are trying to solve these issues. Not people sitting in their basement attacking anyone who is actually doing something about it.

**Conclusion**

So do you think the argument against Solar stands? Do we just continue down the path we are on and watch our planet continue to become warmer, with more extreme weather events and keep digging that oil and gas from the ground? Being subject to the market forces and oil and gas company collusion and cartel price fixing. When we look at the gas prices at $43/barrel and pump prices still at $1.15, there is something very wrong with the current system.

How about a solar panel system and an electric car? Now that is something I am sure even the most hardened energy "troll" could get on board with. Because who really likes paying such high gas prices. Defending the oil and gas industry now?

It really is time for us as caretakers of this planet to look at the options before us and choose the one that is clean, renewable and provides an endless supply. We can power our entire planet for generations to come and create enough jobs for all Canadians that need one. We just need more time to make it happen. But here we are on the cusp of something amazing. So why do so many people have to get down on such a bright future?

To Learn More about Solar and Installations in BC contact Mark Tizya at Novo Solar Systems.

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