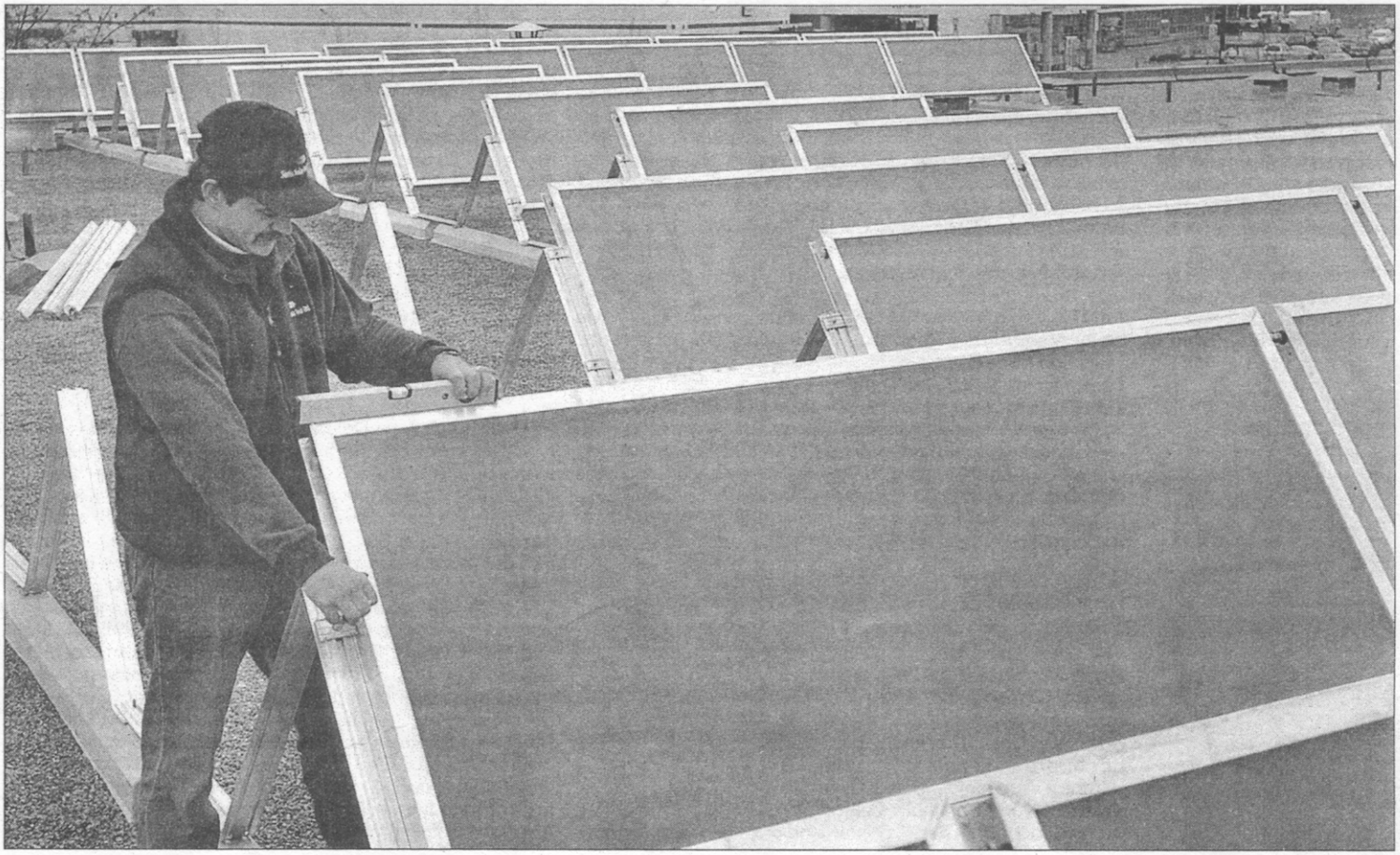


GORDON BAZZANA / CAPITAL NEWS

**ROGER HUBER** of Swiss Solar Tech Ltd. installs solar panels on the roof of the Best Western. It's the first hotel in Canada to install solar panels to heat its water.

# Sun's power will warm hotel's hot water

**By Alistair Waters**
STAFF REPORTER

Greg Salloum's latest addition to his Kelowna hotel will land him in plenty of hot water. And he couldn't be happier.

The Best Western on Harvey Avenue is the first hotel in Canada to install solar panels to heat nearly all its hot water.

That includes a 90,000-litre swimming pool, two hot tubs and all the water used in the 147 guest rooms.

And despite the $200,000 price tag, Salloum says he expects the project will pay for itself in just five years.

"I've been thinking about this for a while, especially when gas prices were going up," he told the *Capital News*.

The 100 solar panels, currently being installed on the roof of a two-storey wing of the hotel, will use the sun's rays to heat 98 per cent of the hotel's water in the summer and 80 per cent in the winter.

In addition to saving the hotel $30,000 per year in energy costs, the new system will also eliminate the production of 90 tonnes of carbon dioxide emitted into the air from the burning of natural gas to heat the water, said Roger Huber of Swiss Solar Tech. Ltd, the Summerland-based company installing the system.

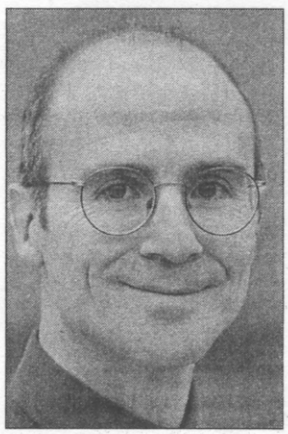
In addition to the solar panels, the company found another source of heat to tap, one ironically generated from the hotel's 100-tonne air conditio.

"We take a couple of degrees from that and use it to help heat the water as well," said Salloum.

The solar-heating project is believed to be the biggest of its kind in the country and could lead the way for other hotels. Salloum said guests will not notice a difference but the bottom line of his business will.

Using a $50,000 federal Renewable Energy Development Incentive grant and $150,000 of their own money, the hotel's owners plan to make the solar panel project the first phase of a three-part plan to reduce energy costs at the hotel.

But the undertaking is proving no simple feat.



*Greg Salloum*

According to Salloum, the existing hot water tanks for the hotel are located on top of the 10-storey tower. That means construction crews have to bore through 10 floors of concrete to create a passage way for the pipes connecting a huge new tank to the hotel's water distribution system.

Salloum said he doesn't mind leading the way, pointing to his hotel's decision to install high-speed Internet connections in all rooms long before other local hotels followed suit.

Happy that both his hotel's financial bottom line and the environment will benefit from this latest move, Salloum said he hopes other commercial operations look at solar power and heating as viable alternatives.

"Everybody wants to wait until somebody else tries whatever is new."