

Arctic Snowplows

Arctic Snowplows builds high quality front- and rear-mounted snow removal equipment for a variety of trucks and skid steer related equipment.

Headquarters	35 Artisans Crescent, London, Ontario, N5V5E9
Year Established	1969
NAICS	336990 - Other transportation equipment manufacturing
Employees	25
Major Expansions	N/A
Exports	US
Parent Company	N/A
Other Locations	Distribution - Oakville, Distribution - Montreal

Canada is known around the world for its famously snowy winters, so it seems appropriate that a Canadian company has stepped up to meet the country's unique challenges, labelling its products as "tougher than a Canadian winter."

Arctic Snowplows (Arctic) was founded in 1969 in London, Ontario as a division of London Machinery. Arctic began primarily as a manufacturer of light truck-mounted snow removal plows and products. In 1994, London Machinery sold its Arctic division to Fluid-Pack International. In 2007 Arctic became a privately owned operation and in 2017 the current ownership bought out the remaining shareholders.

Arctic is a wholly Canadian-owned company that produces truck front and rear mounted plows; lights; tail gate spreaders and truck bed spreader inserts. From its London facility, Arctic produces a wide range of snow removal equipment, including polyethylene and steel blades that range from light to "heavy duty," with blades measuring between 78 inches and 102 inches. A popular export product is the company's "Plow Partner," which can be inserted in the channel of the rear hitch mount. The plow partner allows the user to back up to garage doors or buildings for snow and ice removal from driveways and other smaller areas. Arctic also manufactures a variety of lights that attach to the plows themselves. Additionally Arctic offers both galvanized and poly spreader inserts (gas and electric) of various sizes that are designed to work in even the harshest environments and temperatures.

Arctic's team work approach has helped to make Arctic a successful and responsible Ontario manufacturer. Arctic's products are made by skilled and versatile employees. Arctic employees have a degree of mechanical understanding and inclination. Arctic's staff team includes metal operators, welders, engineers,

and sales representatives—all of whom work together to develop, build, and sell the company’s products. Because of the diverse nature of their work, employees are trained in an array of tasks so that they are never idle.

For example, an Arctic welder may also be trained in the light department; assembly department and other areas of the manufacturing as needed, providing all employees with a well-rounded experience.

In addition, employees have extensive knowledge about servicing and installing the products that they make. This system allows for a very efficient production process while still preserving the incredibly high standard of quality that Arctic is known for.

Arctic tends to produce most of its products between February and June in anticipation of the next winter’s snowfall and demand. Early orders would then be shipped in July, August and September. In more recent years, the increased unpredictability of precipitation levels and weather patterns has led consumers to hold off on their seasonal purchases until September, October or November, in order to better predict what will be needed that winter. A consequence being that while Arctic may accumulate a larger (than preferred) amount of on hand inventory; Arctic’s efficient order processing results in the product within a 24-hour period. The company operates a dealer network around the country to reach out to clients and sell its products. Management is always looking for potential “master dealers” to reach as many clients as possible. The dealers predominately sell to landscapers and property owners, as well as to municipalities and other public institutions.

While Arctic has had limited success in the United States as the culture of buying American-made goods has created a difficult market to break into; Arctic continues to try new marketing approaches to effect growth in the US. Arctic has had success in exporting its plow partner within Michigan. One key factor for this growth has been the promotion of the unit being “Powered by Michigan” as the hydraulics are manufactured in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Armstrong estimates that only 15 per cent of Arctic’s revenue is from exports.

Arctic has sales locations in both the Greater Toronto Area and Montreal. Arctic continues to promote dealership across Canada and the US. Growth in these areas will continue to reduce the shipping costs across Canada.

Aside from the difficulties involved in entering foreign markets and transporting products within domestic markets, Arctic must overcome tough competition from U.S. companies. Major players in the snowplow manufacturing industry—including Western, Fisher, Boss, SnoWay and others— compete with the Arctic territories, both at home and abroad. In recent years, lower-quality light duty offerings have entered the market, attracting customers seeking a lower upfront cost as opposed to long-term reliance. Despite these competitive challenges, Arctic continues to see the value of its role as a manufacturer of quality, reliable products. Arctic continues to offer the best warranty in the industry.

Another challenge faced by Arctic is the changing weather patterns in Southwestern Ontario. Considered to be in a “snow belt,” London once experienced a large, predictable amount of snow each year, which meant

that demand for plows was easy to predict and high. While Armstrong notes, annual snowfall has decreased dramatically and weather patterns become less predictable, Arctic has been exploring opportunities for growing the manufacturing facility in complimentary areas such as agricultural or landscape equipment.

In addition to being a high-quality snow removal equipment manufacturer, Arctic maintains a strong commitment to the community that has supported it for so many years. Armstrong is a firm believer in providing employment opportunities to that community, and offering help to those who need it most. The company sponsors numerous youth sports teams, and supports local charities like the London Food Bank and the Children's Aid Society, among others.

Armstrong, following a career in banking and accounting, became the CFO for the Arctic ownership in 1989. In 2007 Armstrong purchased a minority interest in the business and in 2014 began the buyout of shares ~ reaching his "Victor Kiam" moment on March 1, 2017. Throughout the past 48 years key long term management has allowed Arctic to remain one of Canada's most unique and impressive manufacturers: few other firms in the country create non-highway plows and plowing equipment at the level of quality that Arctic does. Consistently high standards and a commitment to its community make Arctic Snowplows a successful and compelling manufacturing firm.