



## ALMAG ALUMINUM, BRAMPTON, ONTARIO

**A single-source supplier for all areas of aluminum extrusion**

**BY LINDSAY LUMINOSO**

When you turn on to Finley Road in Brampton, Ontario you cannot help but see the massive ALMAG Aluminum headquarters. The aluminum extrusion company was founded in 1953 by Edward Peacock in a small 1,320 square foot facility located in nearby Etobicoke, and it was originally called Almag Aluminum and Magnesium and focused on making decorative aluminum door grilles. For the past 27 years, Bob Peacock, Edward's son, has acted as president, growing ALMAG Aluminum in both size and capabilities.

The Brampton facility is approximately 200,000 square feet, occupying three buildings. There are 210 workers split over three shifts. Two years ago, the company

also expanded into the U.S. with a facility in Ardmore, Alabama, that focuses on fabricating and warehousing. They wanted to focus on better serving a larger customer that had moved from Ontario to Alabama, and give themselves a bigger stake in the U.S. market. Their products are generally for North American customers, with 35-40 per cent of sales in the U.S. But ALMAG's main market is Canada.

ALMAG is in the business of manufacturing and fabricating aluminum extrusions. "It's much like squeezing play-doh or toothpaste out of a tube," explains Bob Peacock. "People with children relate to the play-doh example, where you put the little chunk of play-doh in and squeeze it and it comes out in the shape of a cross, well we do that with aluminum,"



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALMAG

While the company designs and creates complex extrusion profiles, they also do several secondary operations to provide customers with as close to a finished product as possible.

Joe Jackman, vice president, sales and marketing, explains that they offer lots of post-extrusion processes, "Milling, drilling, cutting, notching, bending, deburring, fabricating is all done here. We own a powder coating company in Mississauga. We do a lot of one-stop shopping. You come to us, and we will get you a finished product. We take full responsibility for it."

The company also offers metal finishing, like anodizing, for which they partner with four companies specializing in the process. They also tend to migrate towards more high finish and decorative applications over structural applications.

One of the selling features for ALMAG is the price; typically extrusion tooling is between \$800-2,500, which is fairly inexpensive. An extruder will work on designing the tooling and have costs up front for the customer with a tooling charge added. "It's not like we are talking \$10,000-100,000, and it's one of the biggest things when we meet prospective customers...they aren't used to that [price]," says Jackman.

ALMAG also offers prototyping and can get a die typically within two weeks, so they are able to tool up and die and run some material before you can set a CNC machine program it, mill a sample. This allows for the customer to be ready for production sooner.

Because they deal with a wide variety of markets, the company is constantly working at remaining flexible and technologically advanced. Although they try not to be tied to any one specific market, they work with automotive, medical and healthcare, lighting systems, office systems and furniture, store fixtures and signage, solar systems, and a bit in the electronics industry.

Peacock also explains that, "heat sinks are well suited to aluminum extrusion because aluminum conducts heat very well ... we do a lot in the way of complex heat sinks. We do a little construction work but not much."

On their shop floor, ALMAG is currently working with

materials for various industries, especially automotive. They have assembly lines set up with benders, all individual to specific automotive programs like pillar covers, window guides, roof racks, etc. They are currently extruding parts for Mercedes, BMW, and Chrysler.

When asked if ALMAG was comfortable with the strong tier 2 position they currently occupy serving strong tier ones, Peacock believes that they are in a sweet spot.

"That is not to say that we wouldn't deal with an automotive company and be tier one, but it's not in our plans at the moment," he says.

"The automotive market is one that is going to evolve a lot over the next few years with the CAFE standards. They are looking more and more to aluminum and lightweighting, so it's going to depend on what the automotive customers are looking for, and it could be in three to four years that we will be dealing directly with some of the larger automotive companies."

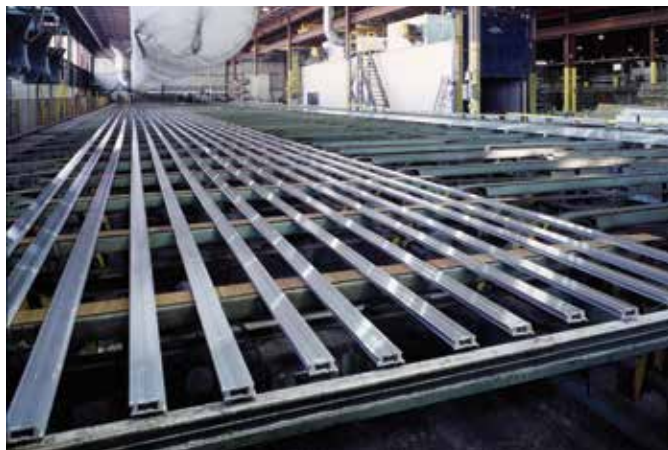
On the line, there are profiles that ALMAG will extrude, cut it back, bend it and heat treat it. They will bend it at a T4 state and put it in the oven and heat treat and artificially age it to harden it up.

They have even invested in a 3D printer, a Dimension SST 1200es, to build plastic prototypes for customers before developing and creating a die.

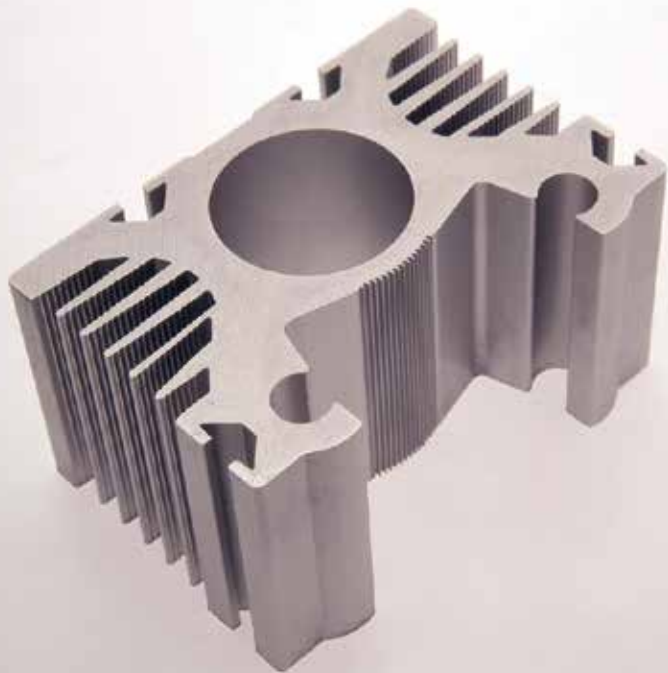
"It's great because when customers have three or four extrusions that have to fit together, right away they can see if the design will work. If the design won't work it will save them thousands of dollars in tooling and time," says Peacock. It's all about serving the customers' needs.

Many customers will call up ALMAG with an idea in their mind, or even a sketch on a napkin, and it's Bob Peacock and his employees' job to bring it to fruition. There is a lot of working with the customers to develop their ideas and "make an extrusion that's extrudable," says Peacock.

Although it is more common to get CAD file designs or models, ALMAG also has an engineer group whose goal is to interpret drawings and ideas and convert them into something the die makers can use—it's all about design assistance.







When it comes to the extrusions themselves, Peacock explains, "We extrude generally common alloys, we don't do exotic alloys, but three or four of the 6000 series."

6061 and 6063 are the most common extrusion alloys that ALMAG works with. 6061 is high-strength alloy used in trucks, trailers, towers, machined parts and marine applications. 6063 is a multi-purpose alloy primarily with applications in windows, doors, signs, furniture, frames, decorative trim, heatsinks and boats.

6463 alloy, used in bright dip or high finish applications, is primarily used for appliance trim, showcases, shower stalls, display systems and light reflectors. 6005 is a structural alloy and is easier to work with than 6061; it is used for antennas, towers and machined parts.

"[6005] has properties like 6061 but extrudes more like 6063, so it's a good compromise," says Peacock. "We've started to work with 1000 series alloys and a little in the 3000 series but 6000 series is at about 90-plus per cent."

In terms of the types of things they extrude, "we tend to get into the high visual, thin walled, tight tolerance, difficult shapes. It's where our sweet spot is in comparison to other extruders," says Jackman. This can also be a big challenge for the company, he explains.

From a selling standpoint, they come across two problems. Getting in front of a designer or engineer and

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explaining or showing them how ALMAG does extrusions is one of the challenges. There is an aluminum standard out there and “we typically start at half tolerances, and two or three times the tolerances on tongue ratios, so it makes it interesting when we get some customers who have been dealing with extruders for a long time. They may have a profile that has been running well for a for them, and we can look at it and say, ‘Hey, we can thin out that wall, or incorporate screw boss or screw part, we can incorporate things in there that can cut down their fabrication or value added things.”

Jackman explains that it’s challenging because ALMAG is always pushing the envelope and trying to create more complicated and better extrusions, and sometimes they may not get a chance to talk to customers, both current and potential, or actually show them how and what they can extrude.

“That keeps us up at night a fair bit. We are doing some things that a couple of years ago we would have said you can’t do,” says Peacock. “But I believe that we are almost in a better position to provide a better product by focusing on what we are really good at, which is extruding and fabricating.” **CM**

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