



Sky's The Limit

A three-pronged approach to real estate

Based in Guelph, Ontario, the Skyline Group unites three smaller companies into one dynamic firm offering real estate investment, development and property management services. The firm also stands out for its steadfast commitment to community service in the markets it serves.

"We offer the whole package for real estate ownership, management and investing opportunities," says Jason Castellan, CEO and Co-Founder of the Skyline Group. "We're really soup-to-nuts when it comes to looking after real estate, from the asset management to property management to acquisitions to investor relations. We do all of that very well and integrate it together to be a full-service entity for all of our tenants and investors."

The Skyline Group has a current portfolio value of over \$680 million, making it the 10th largest owner and manager of multi-residential properties in

Canada as ranked in Canadian Apartment Magazine's May 2011 issue. The Skyline Apartment Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) includes 103 properties across 39 communities in four Canadian provinces.

In its corporate structure, Skyline Management Inc. acts as the property manager for the REIT. Skyline Asset Management Inc. oversees acquisitions and asset management, while Skyline Wealth Management Inc. conducts the wealth management. According to Castellan, these entities work together toward the successful operation of the REIT.

"They are integrated, and because we control all three of them, we can communicate very well between all three entities," he says. "When Acquisitions is out looking for real estate, then we can communicate well in advance with the investor relations team in order to be able to go to our inves-

The Skyline Group

CEO/Co-Founder
Jason Castellan

Location
Guelph, Ontario

Skyline is the Presenting Sponsor of their local OHL hockey team, The Guelph Storm. The Founders dropped the puck at the season opening game



tors and make sure that the support for the capital to be raised is there. Then, we can turn around and talk to the property management team to make sure that they can take the property in and that we have the right personnel and resources in that region.”

According to Castellan, having these different entities involved in the process allows the company to manage properties in its REIT with expert care.

“It’s important to have those three facets of the business under control if you want to purchase, integrate and invest in those types of properties,” he says.

A CASE IN POINT

One recent success for the firm has been the 383 Vine Street redevelopment project in St. Catharines, Ontario. The project was a major commitment, both in terms of time and money. The renovation of the units and common areas of the building took approximately 18 months to complete. Meanwhile, the project also required a large investment up front, which posed some potential risk to the Skyline Group. Fortunately, it proved to have huge returns, and the company doubled its principal almost immediately.

“When we took over the project and as we got deeper and deeper into it, the market really came to us,” Castellan says. “There were people who came and said, ‘If you do this, I would come and live here.’ It really evolved over time, where the project became bigger and more successful than we ever could have imagined, just by getting good feedback from our market. We also made some very strategic and practical decisions on where and how to invest our money within that project.”

It’s clear that the Skyline Group is getting more than just “good feedback” from its market. The company has become an award-winning real estate business in some of the most renowned circles of the industry. In December of 2010, Skyline won four of the 16 awards given out at the Federation of Rental Housing Providers of Ontario’s annual Marketing Achievement and Construction Awards Dinner and Gala. This came just one year after Skyline was nominated in five categories, winning one. Considering the paucity of awards given out, combined with the fact that there were over 120 unique applicants for these awards, it was quite a high honor that was given to the Skyline Group. The awards were selected by an independent panel of ten professionals in the real estate industry.



47 & 67 Village Drive in Kingston, ON

Three of these awards focused on Skyline's business endeavors. The company won the "Rental Development of the Year" award for its Place Sainte Marie development in Haileybury, Ontario, a project that restored an 80-year old convent and transformed it into a fully functional assisted living facility for senior citizens. The "Resident Manager of the Year" award acknowledged the company's outstanding reputation among all of its renters and for its remarkable onsite staff at one of its London, Ontario properties. The "Curb Appeal, Rental Development" award honored the Skyline Group's renovation project at 55 Yarmouth Street in Guelph, Ontario. All of these awards place Skyline as a true leader in its industry, a company that operates as all real estate companies should aspire to operate.

OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY SERVICE

The fourth award, however, was an honor that goes above and beyond the Skyline Group's day-to-day operations; truly showcasing its dedication to the community it serves.

That award was the "Outstanding Community Service" award, which highlights another characteristic that truly sets the Skyline Group apart from its competition. This was the second consecutive year that the Skyline Group was presented this award, and it's easy to see why. The company is entrenched in a number of charitable causes, supporting everything from ovarian cancer research to

Habitat for Humanity to a local hockey team and the 'Big Brothers Big Sisters Foundation'. It's the type of commitment that one typically sees from nonprofit organizations, not large real estate firms, but Castellan says that the Skyline Group's involvement in community service is just as important as anything else that its team does on a daily basis.

"To be involved in those communities in which we own real estate is important, because it allows us to give back to our tenants," says Castellan. "We like to give back to the communities where we operate, and we also do so on behalf of our investors."

Skyline did extensive fundraising last year for the 'Children's Foundation of Guelph and Wellington', and the 'Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Guelph and Onward Willow', raising \$20,000 for each organization. One of the company's most well known charitable endeavors is its involvement in the Children's Foundation's 'Food and Friends' program. Since last year, the company has been sponsoring eight local breakfast programs at schools and community centers near Skyline properties. The program offers nutritious snacks and meals to over 1,500 children every day who may otherwise have gone without. "Supporting children in our community, particularly children that live in our buildings, is a top priority," says Castellan.

For its commitment to the 'Children's Foundation's' numerous programs, the Skyline Group was hon-



ored as the organization's 2011 Corporate Sponsor of the Year.

INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

It's not just children and families who are touched by Skyline's generosity, as the company is closely involved with building the future of real estate on college campuses, as well. The University of Guelph's Real Estate and Housing major is one of only two undergraduate programs in all of Canada that focuses strictly on the real estate sector of business. This program takes a multidisciplinary approach to the study of residential and commercial and investment real estate, giving students the chance to explore topics like the development, financing, valuation, market analysis and management of real estate. These areas are looked at in the context of economic, legal, political and social factors that affect business in Canada and the world.

Skyline is particularly enthused by this program. To encourage all students who choose to go into this field, the company has donated a significant amount of money toward an annual scholarship for students in that program. The company believes that through investing in a student, it can invest in the future of the industry.

In addition to financial support, Skyline Group encourages its employees to give their time and talents to the community, as well.

"It's about feeding the hand that feeds you, not biting the hand that feeds you," Castellan says. "We are proud to empower our employees and provide them with the opportunity to make contributions to those communities that are going to serve and represent our tenants."

It's not just about the awards for the Skyline Group; it's about the people. This passion is infectious, and it's clear that it has spread throughout all areas of Skyline's staff, up and down and across the entire business.

"We try to go above and beyond, and it's not just chasing the bottom line at all costs," Castellan says. "We think that we can enhance the benefit to not only our investors, but also to our employees and the people who live in our buildings. That gets recognized, and people appreciate it."

Central to achieving this vision is getting buy-in from the Skyline Group's employees at all levels of the organization.

"We've got a great team that really does care about how Skyline conducts its business," says Castellan. "Being recognized by our peers in the areas that we work shows that, and when we talk to our own employees and ask why they choose to work with Skyline, it's because of our community involvement and because we give back."

Skyline's three-pronged approach to real estate investment, development and property management services looks to be a successful model. The firm's strong grounding in the communities it serves has earned it professional recognition and a solid foundation on which to drive its future growth.

"For us, it is kind of surreal to think about where we came from," Castellan says. "We've come a long way, and I think it's very important for people to know that we really do appreciate our staff, our investors, our tenants and the people who surround us. It's working for us, and it is a great model to continue forward with." DDC