

taxpayers from the possibility of loss.

Not only did the city draw on legal advice, the city investigated Stream thoroughly to determine whether the company was sound, it was paying its bills and to satisfy inevitable concerns about risk of flight leaving taxpayers holding the bag.

"We said to the lawyers we want this to be completely legal under the Municipal Act. We also wanted to make sure taxpayers' had protection," said Martiuk Wednesday.

A city check was also completed on Stream to do a comprehensive review of the company's business ratings, company financial statements and history.

"We checked with the industry and found they are a fast-growing company in a fast-growing industry. Fast-growing companies do have inherent risk," said Martiuk. "But we don't believe they (Stream) would set up a call centre and leave. It doesn't make sense."

The background check on Stream included services conducted through the Dunn and Bradstreet rating agency in the United States on behalf of the city.

Stream's bill of health came back positive, said Martiuk.

If Stream defaulted, for the sake of argument, Martiuk said the city would immediately call in the letter of credit for \$3.5 million, and then, under its lien on the

property could seize up to \$1.5 million in equipment.

Martiuk said equipment would be still be marketable because RioCan would need the city-owned air conditioners, hydro transformers, office equipment to lease out the building again.

"If the owner of the buildings was to lease it to someone else, (after a possible closure by Stream) he would have difficulty doing that with the air conditioners, hydro back up (city-owned transformers) being seized," said Martiuk, adding the property owner would be smarter to deal with the city than fight.

Martiuk said RioCan is a Toronto-based property management company with no "believed" local ownership ties to the Quinte area.

The agreement, meanwhile, has one very clear condition.

The city makes it clear that in exchange for leasing the \$5 million in leasehold equipment, "Stream agrees to use reasonable commercial efforts to create jobs in the City of Belleville area..."

Stream agreed to have a guaranteed minimum of "500 jobs" in its employ at the call centre in the last term of the 10 year agreement.

Stream president Scott Murray told The Intelligencer in recent interviews he fully expects the city call centre employee roster to reach 1,000.