

□ BUSINESS

# Mayor lauds Staikos for Stream initiative

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"He told me he was looking at Halifax and New Brunswick. I told him we need the jobs in Belleville. I said: 'We definitely need the jobs. I went and met Mayor Ross McDougall and Steve (Hyndman, director of development services for the city) and they began work right away,'" said Staikos last night from his home in Trenton.

Staikos said it's a good feeling to know that the possibility of up to 1,000 jobs coming to Belleville is drawing near and admitted it's a good feeling knowing he had a small part to play in coaxing Stream's search here.

"It's nice to be alert to look out for the community. It's nice to work together," said Staikos.

Mayor McDougall, too, lauded Staikos, saying without Staikos' sharp thinking the new contact centre might be destined for the Maritimes instead.

"A lot of people wouldn't think to ask why not their hometown. Nick called me and told me Chris was talking to a relative in Boston. I met with Chris later that day and then I called (Stream's Murray) to ask him if he would consider coming to Belleville."

A high-level meeting soon followed when Murray visited Belleville for a familiarization tour of the city to scout the city's prospects as new home for Stream. A flood of Stream staffers later came to the city to do their own investigation leading up to the city meeting the final test: two days of an information job fair to help Murray and other company officials acquaint themselves with the quality of the city workforce.

In an interview from Boston, Murray said in this final study of the area, the company wants to gauge the skills, education and calibre of potential employees before making a final commitment to make Belleville home of its first customer call/contact centre venture into Canada.

Stream International already has seven centres around the world from Japan and France to Ireland, United States and the Netherlands and employs 7,000

trained workers who help people use technology through technical support. Every year, Stream employees handle 30 million phone calls, e-mails, and chatline requests from customers about everything from software and computers to e-commerce. Staff coach callers or Internet users through their technical problems on behalf of clients such as Microsoft and Dell.

Stream president Murray will be present for a press conference at the job fair at Quinte Sports Centre Thursday at 1 p.m. to elaborate on the what "this opportunity will mean for Belleville and the surrounding areas and what it will take for people to become employees," said a statement from the company.

Stream staff will be on hand to personally conduct a meeting with potential employees Thurs., June 15 and Fri., June 16 at the Quinte Sports Centre. The doors will remain open from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. each day.