

## O'Leary P.E.I. is now a Town!



O'LEARY -- Anyone calling the O'Leary Municipal office this week might have already clued in that the community's application for town status has been approved

Administrator Bev Shaw is answering the phone with, "Town Office," or, at least she is when she doesn't slip up and answer with the more familiar "Community Office" greeting. Old habits are hard to break, the administrator admits.

Stanley MacDonald who makes the shift from chairman of the Community of O'Leary to Mayor of the Town of O'Leary, says there are lots of changes to be made, including municipal signage and letterhead. He expects there will be some discussion about the changeover when O'Leary holds its first monthly meeting as a town on Thursday night, but he suggested it will only be general discussion at that time as council already has a busy agenda.

The monthly meeting was supposed to be held last week but got delayed because of the late winter storm.

"We got accepted as a town on March 11. We don't have it all in writing, but we have it unofficially." He said that's when the Provincial cabinet gave its approval. The municipality has received confirmation via a phone conversation with the Department that it's official.

"We'll eventually have to get everything changed over," he said of the signage, website and other details.

"The big thing is, of course, we can hold meetings now without going through a rig-a-ma-roll that's usually is a long process, and if there is a current issue that we have to make a decision on, it will be more simple to deal with it," MacDonald said of what the change in status will mean for council.

Residents had given Council permission during a special meeting in January to petition the Department of Municipal Affairs for town status.

The only concern residents had prior to the vote was whether O'Leary, as a town, would have to cover costs for street maintenance and snow-clearing, something that it was not responsible for as a community. MacDonald indicated at that time that the Department had already given its assurances that the Province would continue to cover those costs.

Council will hold its annual meeting next Tuesday and will provide the annual reports of the Community of O'Leary for 2013 and present O'Leary's first town budget.

MacDonald said he hopes the presentation of annual reports won't change.

"Input from residents is important, he said. "I would hope that that would continue. If you don't communicate well with your people you're leaving yourself in a situation where there may be ideas they have that we wouldn't think of," he stated.

The municipal election process will change in that candidates will register in advance, and residents will cast votes during an all-day poll rather than selecting candidates and voting in one sitting during an election meeting. Municipal elections will be held across the Island in November. MacDonald anticipates the number of councilors will remain the same as it was when O'Leary was a community, six councilors and, under the new status, a mayor.