



January 29, 2026

Honourable Cory Deagle
Minister of Housing, Land and Communities,

My name is Judith Graves, and my husband and I live in Albany, PEI. I'm a multi-published, award-winning young adult fiction author and children's book illustrator. My husband is a teacher and basketball coach at Three Oaks High School. I own Sassy Lassie Vintage, which opened last June, and serves as my own art gallery, as well as featuring other Island artists, authors, and makers, along with vintage decor.

Our property is on the Trans Canada Highway, a red house with a red barn. You may be familiar with the century-old historic Queen Anne style "Fox House" which was indeed established by fox farmers in the early 20th century. It later became a bed and breakfast (run by the Jamie Fox family, I believe) and features a wonderfully restored historic barn. Decades of previous owners maintained the property. It has won an award via the PEI Rural Beautification Society Heritage Home Competition.

Having a small business in this location highlights Island history and demonstrates what can be done with historic properties that have been maintained or restored. As an arts and vintage-focused shop, we provide Island artists with a place to showcase their work, all while offering a sustainable, eco-friendly shopping experience.

Before we opened, I was keen to have one of the tourist destination-type signage similar to other galleries and shops on the Island. I contacted Transportation and Infrastructure and was informed that before I could be given a permit for a sign, I needed to apply for a Change in Use from Residential to Commercial. I applied in July and did not hear back from anyone. In November, I emailed to check on the application and was told a decision had yet to be made.

Then, in January, I received a registered letter that said I was denied the rezoning. Why? The Department of Transportation, Infrastructure explained that I cannot be issued an "Entrance Way Permit" granting people access to our property via the Trans Canada Highway.

At no time was I informed that there was an issue with my rezoning application, or that I needed an "Entrance Way Permit" from the Housing, Land and Communities department, or that this permit would likely not be given. Therefore, I was not given an opportunity to somehow address this issue before the decision to deny was made.

I have filed an appeal with Housing, Land and Communities. I have also contacted Matthew MacFarlane, MLA (Borden-Kinkora), to bring awareness to this situation, which is affecting a small business in his riding.

My property is located on a straight stretch of highway with good visibility in both directions. It has a long lane and five parking spaces well off the highway. My husband and I will be expanding our parking spaces to further ensure safety and easier turnarounds for visitors as they exit.

I am requesting that the decision be reviewed due to the large number of existing businesses along the Trans Canada Highway, which serve as precedent. As I'm sure you're aware, there are many similar shops and small businesses along the Trans Canada Highway.

I would like to be assured that my business is treated fairly and equally with existing businesses on the highway. I would like to establish that I am being given equal opportunities and am not being punished for attempting to follow the rule of law and seek proper permits.

Sassy Lassie Vintage is a small, seasonal, niche shop that appeals to a select slice of the tourism and culture economy: it attracts visitors looking for unique art and sustainable treasures. It is not a busy restaurant, ice cream dairy bar, or large box store that would generate copious traffic and lead to congestion or line-ups on the Trans Canada Highway, certainly no more than businesses like:

Master Packing
Kent Homes
Pizza & Donair Hub
Howatt's Shell
DM Auto Repair
Albany Y Kennels
Bugaboo Cottages
Anchor Suites
Drummond Collision Centre
Roberts Auctioneering Services
PEI Fox Den
Thompson's Woodcraft
Canada's Best Value Inn & Suites
The Handpie Company
Lambe Concrete
Red Rooster Restaurant
South Shore Actiplex

South Shore Pharmacy
Larkin Farms
Canada Post Office
Home Run Pizza Eatery
Atlantic Guns and Gear Hunting and Fishing Store
Crapaud Public Library
Englewood School
St. John's Anglican Church Hall and Thrift Store
Multiple Churches
Coastal Escape PEI
The Iceman
Purolator Courier
Leon's Warehouse
Blue Goose Restaurant
Car Life Museum
Gass's General Store
Back Home Antiques
Tryon Blueberry U-pick
Robin's Nest Antiques

These are just the businesses between Summerside and Charlottetown, not including Highway 1 West of Summerside and East of Charlottetown, as well as Highway 2. This list also does not include the many small produce stands or bed and breakfasts (Airbnb establishments) that also contribute to the dynamic of the island during the summer.

Many of these businesses are promoted through the province's tourism department website and social media marketing (tourismpei.com) and are hailed as destinations via the popular Island "drives". Below is text from our region's Red Sands Shore description actively encouraging stops at small shops and roadside attractions:

"The Red Sands Shore region is rich with **artisans, galleries and architecture**. Indulge in culinary, theatre and **culture**. Stop at a wharf or **roadside** produce stand for dinner essentials and discover the rolling terrain, offering the most perfect scenic tour - a favourite way to enjoy the Island's pastoral landscape."

It is my understanding that these businesses have been operating without incident relating to their highway access for an untold number of years. They must either have permits, proper zoning, or have been granted exceptions, OR be contravening the very same law that is being applied to Sassy Lassie Vintage.

I would like your assurance that these businesses are all operating with the requisite permits and zoning requirements, or have benefited from an exception that I would like considered for Sassy Lassie Vintage. I believe it is reasonable for me to ask that we all play by the same rules. If they are in contravention of the law, it is logical to expect the same heavy hand to be applied to all businesses along the Trans Canada Highway.

As you can imagine, being denied entry to our shop is devastating. My husband and I purchased this house/barn/property a year ago with the specific intention of opening our shop/gallery. We spent last winter further renovating the barn to be shop-ready. Having a small gallery for my own work and the opportunity to promote other talent has been a lifelong dream.

We had a fantastic first season as a bookstore/gallery/vintage shop and are keen to build on this success. We will be hiring a summer student for the 2026 season. Our goals are to foster a love of Island talent, to support Island makers, artists, and authors, and to provide antique/vintage items to people seeking their aesthetic, as well as to offer more environmentally sustainable shopping experiences. We help attract people to the Island through our social media presence and raise awareness of Island history, culture, and talent. I am also developing a TV series with a local film production company based on Sassy Lassie Vintage and how our historic barn shop brings together Island talent, history, and visitors. Many artists, authors, and illustrators will be featured, along with various historical aspects of our region.

I have included several letters of support from arts and small-business organizations that have been to the shop and seen what we've accomplished in a short time. I hope you find them compelling support that Sassy Lassie Vintage plays an important role in the promotion of Island culture. I am a member of the Prince Edward Island Business Women's Association and believe in building relationships with other businesses and supporting our Island communities. It has been a goal for Sassy Lassie Vintage to promote the various businesses and communities around us when visitors come to our shop. I am illustrating a map to hand out to visitors which features these nearby locations.

I may be a come-from-away, but my family hails from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. I lived in Summerside as a child – my father was in the forces – and Prince Edward Island was very much a part of my youth. We moved West, but the dream was always to return to the island, and I happily brought my husband back with me five years ago. Did I mention we even had an Anne of Green Gables-themed wedding, way back in the 90s when themed weddings weren't even a thing? Anyway, we love our new life in PEI.

Thank you for reviewing my appeal.

Tracy Belsher (writing as Judith Graves)
Author / Illustrator / Sassy Lassie Vintage Shop Owner
My website: <https://judithgraves.com/>
Check out [Sassy Lassie Vintage](#)
Check out my [Etsy shop](#)



January 26, 2026

RE: Sassy Lassie Vintage

To Whom It May Concern,

We are writing in support of our member, Judith Graves, owner of Sassy Lassie Vintage. In preparation for her first operating season, Judith participated in our Peer Mentorship Program to build her confidence and gain access to relevant resources to support the successful launch of her business within her community.

Judith is a dedicated entrepreneur with a clear vision for her business. She is committed to creating a welcoming space for PEI artists to connect and showcase their work, while also promoting sustainability through the resale of thoughtfully curated, previously loved items.

We strongly believe Judith would be a valuable addition to any opportunity that allows her to further engage with and contribute to the community she is proud to serve.

Warm regards,

Krystal Bennett

(She, Her, Hers)

Business Growth Advisor

PEI Business Women's Association

January 24th, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong support for Sassy Lassie Vintage and to respectfully request reconsideration of the recent decision denying the rezoning application for their property.

I have visited Sassy Lassie Vintage and experienced the space as a customer, and I have since recommended it to others. It is a thoughtfully curated bookstore, gallery, and vintage shop that adds cultural value, encourages local tourism, and contributes positively to the small business ecosystem on PEI.

Sassy Lassie Vintage opened last June after the owners purchased the property with the specific intention of establishing this business. They invested significant time and financial resources renovating the barn over the winter and operated successfully through their first season. This was not a speculative or temporary venture, but a carefully planned business and the realization of a lifelong dream.

The denial of rezoning, based on the Department of Transportation, Infrastructure's decision regarding an Entrance Way Permit from the Trans-Canada Highway, places the future of this successful business in jeopardy. Without some form of exception or alternative solution, Sassy Lassie Vintage will be forced to close.

I find this particularly difficult to understand given that there are numerous businesses operating along the Trans-Canada Highway throughout Prince Edward Island. Many of these businesses rely on similar access, and it is unclear why Sassy Lassie Vintage cannot be afforded the same consideration, especially given its scale, community benefit, and proven success.

Small, independent businesses are vital to PEI's identity and economy. They create meaningful destinations, support local artists and makers, and encourage people to explore beyond large commercial centres. Sassy Lassie Vintage exemplifies this spirit, and its closure would represent a real loss to both the local community and the broader Island economy.

I respectfully urge the Department to explore any flexibility, precedent, or alternative pathway that would allow this business to continue operating safely and responsibly. A collaborative and solution-focused approach would support entrepreneurship while still addressing infrastructure and safety concerns.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Michelle McAulay, Owner
Destination Meetings Concierge, PEI
meetmichelledmc@gmail.com

January 24, 2026

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in strong support of Judith Graves and the Sassy Lassie Vintage Shop, a thriving local venture that champions Island makers, artists, and authors, enriching our cultural landscape and stimulating our rural economy.

It is concerning to learn that rezoning from residential to commercial is stalled due to an "Entrance Way Permit" issue regarding Trans-Canada Highway access.

Many successful PEI businesses located just off Highway 1, such as the renowned PEI Handpie Company, the Red Rooster Restaurant and others, thrive despite similar access points, adding significant value to our tourism and local industries.

Observations show the property in question has clear sight lines that appear to meet minimum distance requirements. Visibility is not the primary issue; **safety solutions** are the opportunity.

When an entrepreneur demonstrates such passion and ability to boost PEI's local economy, it is essential that we collaborate to find a solution. I urge a working partnership between the business owner and PEI Highway Safety to implement a safe, effective exit and entry plan—whether through signage, driveway modifications, or other mutually agreeable measures.

We must foster, not hinder, enterprises that amplify local voices and bolster our island's unique cultural economy.

Yours truly,
Carol Rybinski

Tyne Valley Teas Café
Tea - and Company!
6980-A Route 12, Tyne Valley
Prince Edward Island, Canada
C0B-2C0
902-831-3069

FROM THE DESK OF

MAUREEN HANLEY

January 25, 2026

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in support of Judith Graves and the Sassy Lassie Vintage Shop, a successful local business that promotes Island makers, artists and authors while contributing to the rural economy.

Tourism is a major industry and revenue driver for Prince Edward Island. Visitor satisfaction depends on a mix of welcoming, distinctive businesses that encourage longer stays and repeat visits. Independent shops like this one play an important role in rounding out the visitor experience and strengthening local communities.

It is concerning that the rezoning request has been denied due to an Entrance Way Permit related to Trans-Canada Highway access. This request appears reasonable and consistent with other businesses operating in close proximity along Highway 1 without issue. The business owner is simply asking for fair and equitable treatment.

Clear sight lines exist at this location and safety does not appear to be an insurmountable barrier. Rather than defaulting to a denial, this presents an opportunity for collaboration. With thoughtful planning, signage or driveway modifications, a safe and effective solution seems achievable.

When entrepreneurs invest in their communities and contribute to both economic and cultural vitality, our systems should support problem-solving, not create dead ends. I respectfully encourage all parties to work together to find a practical path forward for this thriving and successful Island business.

Best,



Maureen Hanley

COO

Navigate Food Safety Solutions Inc.

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CONTACT