

**November 9, 2023**

## **A joint statement from Scholastic Canada, Annick Press, and Owlkids Books on children's access to books**

We are issuing this statement as a collective of three publishers (Scholastic Canada, Annick Press, Owlkids Books) concerned about a recent decision by an Ontario school board to restrict access to, or shadow ban, four titles that were nominated by the Ontario Library Association for this year's Forest of Reading program. These books include *Jude Saves the World* by Ronnie Riley (Scholastic Canada), *Salma Writes a Book* by Danny Ramadan, illustrated by Anna Bron (Annick Press), *The Mystery of the Painted Fan* by Linda Trinh, illustrated by Clayton Nguyen (Annick Press), and *Princess Pru and the Ogre on the Hill* by Maureen Fergus, illustrated by Danesh Mohiuddin (Owlkids Books)—all books that feature or include 2SLGBTQIA+ characters.

As publishers, we stand behind our books and our creators and oppose any attempts to undermine the freedom to read. Books can serve as mirrors in which kids see themselves, their stories, and their communities reflected, providing an important sense of value, affirmation, and belonging. Books also serve as windows through which young people can see into other experiences and realities, building understanding and empathy across differences. At a time in which we're facing immense challenges as a society, it is especially critical that all kids, including those who are 2SLGBTQIA+ and from other underrepresented communities, have access to stories that celebrate the rich and diverse experiences of the children we serve across the country.

Scholastic Canada, Annick Press, and Owlkids Books reaffirm our commitment to publishing stories that are representative of all children. We stand unequivocally behind our authors and illustrators and implore our valued partners to join us in defending the right to read and children's access to books.

