

April 15, 2010

Open Letter

To: Dr. Chris Spence, Director of Education, Toronto and District School Board.

From: The Writers' Union of Canada

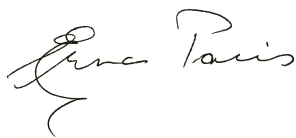
Dear Dr. Spence:

Once again we observe that the Toronto and District School Board (TDSB) is undertaking a formal review of an acclaimed children's book, this time *The Shepherd's Granddaughter*, in reaction to parent complaints. Some parents and other interest groups have taken the position that if they dislike a particular book, it should be removed from the curriculum, school library shelves and reading lists. Many celebrated books have been challenged, including *Harry Potter*, *Underground to Canada* and *Asha's Mums*. However, a majority of school boards deal with such challenges by offering the children of offended parents alternative reading material. If all books thought to be offensive by some were removed, school bookshelves would be bare, indeed.

Recalling the controversy over the TDSB's decision to remove the award-winning book *Three Wishes* from your K-8 schools and the stated objections of the Writers' Union of Canada to that decision, we strongly urge you to adopt other means of addressing objections than depriving entire student populations of thought-provoking texts. While parents and others are free to determine what their own children may read, they ought not to be able to dictate what others may read.

We hope that your review committee will decide will decide in favour of the right of children to read freely, as well as the right of educators to educate across a broad spectrum of ideas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Erna Paris". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Erna Paris

Chair, The Writers' Union of Canada

The Writers' Union of Canada is our country's national organization representing professional authors of books. Founded in 1973, the Union is dedicated to fostering writing in Canada, and promoting the rights, freedoms, and economic well being of all writers. For more information, please visit www.writersunion.ca