



## **2005 Debbie Zimmerman Early Years Niagara Literary Award Named – Knuffle Bunny Chosen as Favourite Children’s Book**

### **Media Release**

**St. Catharines, ON (October 14, 2005):** Yesterday evening at the Region of Niagara Council meeting the winning early years book of the Debbie Zimmerman Early Years Niagara Literary Award was named. Knuffle Bunny, written by Mo Willems, was chosen as the award winner after a process of on-line voting and voting by ballot at Ontario Early Years Centres, Regional Child Care Centres, Chapters bookstore, and public libraries across the Niagara Region.

A total of 1,400 ballots were cast with Knuffle Bunny receiving the majority of votes. Votes were cast by children, parents and grandparents. Debbie Zimmerman said, “I am pleased to see the interest in early years literacy across the Region. Early years literacy gives children opportunities to develop their full potential in the areas of health and knowledge that will last a lifetime.”

A review of awards for excellence in children’s literature showed that none existed in Canada for infants to age six. This award aims to draw attention not only to the value of reading with children in their early years when their brains are at peak development, but also to the need for quality books for this age group.

The award is named for Debbie Zimmerman to recognize her six years as Regional Chair (1998-2003). The award continues her legacy by: highlighting the importance of the youngest citizens in Niagara; encouraging early reading with children from infancy to age six; helping parents choose the right books for children from infancy to age six; and celebrating children’s authors.

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