Feedback from Boards re Safety Concerns

Question posed to School Board Superintendents:

Dear Superintendents,

Further to our discussions of earlier this afternoon, I am asking you to articulate concerns you have regarding student safety and security (including the security of the school buildings) should all NSTU member-employees follow the directives as set out in NSTU's "Work to Rule 2016" booklet. In addition, I am seeking your professional advice and recommendation to the question of whether consideration should be given to close schools to students due to uncertainty and safety concerns.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sandra McKenzie
Deputy Minister
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Board Responses:

Board	Response
AVRSB	Deputy Minister McKenzie, Our priority is to provide a safe environment for students to learn. To be confident that our schools can provide this, there are two important factors. First, appropriate and adequate direct supervision of students must be in place during the times that students are at school, but not receiving classroom instruction. Our current contingency plan relies on additional staff members following modified schedules to ensure supervision before school, during recess and lunch breaks, and after school. Any change in the availability of employee groups during these times would jeopardize these plans and create potentially unsafe situations for students. Second, administrators must be responsible for the overall safety and security of students from the time they arrive at school to the time they leave, as outlined in the Education Act. Administrators—principals and, in some schools, vice principals—provide leadership and supervision to all staff in schools and oversee all aspects of school operations. If administrators cannot, due to limitations imposed by the NSTU, reliably carry out these essential functions and provide leadership to staff, we cannot be certain that our schools are providing the safest environments possible. We know that all of our staff members—NSTU members and others—care deeply for the well-being and education of students, but are obliged to comply with directives of their union. The level of uncertainty created by these directives leaves us two options; to proceed with schools open on Monday with increased risk, or to err on the side of student safety. To uphold our priority of student safety, we must consider closing schools to students until we can ensure that appropriate student supervision will continue, and administrators are able to meet their obligations under the Education Act.

Board	Response
	Respectfully,
CBVRSB	Attached separate document.
CCRSB	Good afternoon Sandra, Thank you for consulting with Superintendents on safety concerns. This has been the primary focus of our Strike Management Committee since receiving the NSTU Work to Rule 2016 document. If all NSTU members follow the NSTU directives in this booklet, we have the following concerns related to safety and security: 1. Before and After School Supervision can only be managed with reasonable certainty if the Principal remains in charge and actively supervises, particularly in 43 schools where at least one bus arrives prior to the 20 minute timeframe for NSTU supervision of students. 19 of the 43 schools will require more than just the Principal to oversee early arrivals. Where NSGEU or other staff support the Principal with daily supervision, the Principal is understood to be in charge and the source of direction in case of emergency. Similarly, 8 of our schools require supervision for some students beyond the 20 minute timeframe due to delayed buses. 2. In all of our schools, active supervision and accepted responsibility by the Principal is a prerequisite of safety and security during the noon hour. The directives of the NSTU booklet leave this requirement in serious question (impacts over 19,000 students). Additionally, 11 of our schools rely on the participation of NSTU members for daily supervision and our contingency plans are currently functional in theory only, as an NSGEU memo and the reservations of individuals have resulted in an inability to confirm who will accept supervisory roles on Monday, December 5th (impacts 2500 students). 3. The directive which denies access to a Teacher-in-Charge raises serious concern and potential vulnerabilities for next week. Many of our schools are small and do not have a Vice Principal on staff. In many of our schools that do have a Vice Principal, they have significant classroom teaching responsibilities. On any given day 10% of our principals may be out of the building for valid reasons. We simply cannot operate a school with the degree of safety required in situations where there is no teacher in charge due to principal absence. We are continuing to explore every possible option and are working to keep schools open if at all possible. All scenarios would still require an assurance that the NSTU will recognize and support the responsibilities of the Principal under the Education Act. A more in depth analysis of safety impacts related to the directives of the NSTU booklet has been conducted by the Strike Management Committee and there are additional concerns, although possibly mitigated. Having considered this

Board	Response
	information in its entirety, we do not currently have a reasonable degree of certainty that it will be safe to open schools on Monday, December 5th. We believe the following is necessary to resolve in order to proceed in safely operating schools: - NSTU confirm and clearly communicate o that principals and vice principals maintain their broad responsibilities for the safe operation of the school and school community (without exception) o the above includes that principals and vice principals actively supervise during lunch (not only "respond") o the above includes that principals and vice principals will actively supervise in situations where students are expected to attend even if it is outside the 20 minutes o that any teacher may act and will be supported in doing so as teacher-in-charge in accordance with regional board agreements - NSGEU employees confirm and their union clearly supports that additional hours for student monitoring be accepted by NSGEU members and relied upon by the board Depending on what is resolved (and what may not be) will determine on a school by school basis whether safety can be satisfactorily established. Only then will we have confidence that we can safely operate our schools. I trust this supports decision making and will be happy to provide further information if needed.
CSAP	In light of the present situation where all NSTU member-employees follow the directives as set out in NSTU's "Work to Rule 2016" booklet, CSAP has important concerns regarding student safety. In addition, our contingency plans regarding student supervision before, during and after school have now been compromised with the positions taken by NSGEU and CUPE. These persons were an integral part of the supervision plan and their absence will hinder our capacity to ensure student safety and security at all times. Principals of our schools now feel that their ability to ensure our student's security with a high degree of certainty is impossible. We have grave concerns at the moment that we, as a Board, will not be in a position to articulate to parents with absolute confidence, that their child's safety will be ensured as of Monday morning. It is our opinion that consideration should be given to close schools to students due to uncertainty and safety concerns.
HRSB	I have confidence in the Contingency Plans developed for our Board in the case of *rotating strike, global strike* or *work to rule* job action. The foundation of each of

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	these plans is leadership at the school responsible for the safe operation of the school. This assures safety of students in our care. As you know, the NSTU has indicated a partial withdrawal of services effective Monday. This removes the assurance of someone in charge (principal). This puts students at risk in many ways, particularly over the lunch hour. Specifically, our work to rule plan for supervision is predicated on individuals reporting to someone. Many new faces with no ability to rely on leadership for various incidents is unsafe. We have recently been advised that teachers who are unable to report to work are being directed to advise their principal within the 20 minute window of their work day, not before. Should this happen, it will absolutely result in classrooms without teachers. This is unsafe, and not able to be mitigated in a timely manner. Our contingency plans were built on duties of principals and teachers in the Education Act. If the law is not a foundation for our plans, the *uncertainty* of what services teachers and principals will continue to perform causes grave safety concerns for the 48,000 students in our schools. I can offer a variety of examples which we have considered with elementary students, secondary students, students with special needs and others. Our staff is working to ensure schools are open. We are working to identify risk and mitigation strategies so to ensure the safety of students in our care. We are not yet able to problem-solve this partial strike. If we do proceed with schools open on Monday with heightened risk, I do not expect that we will be able to mitigate the uncertainty of what services we can reliably count on as situations predictably escalate after Monday. I am receiving many inquiries from parents. Most relate to the safety of their child(ren) and are looking for assurance of a continued safe and positive school environment. At present, under current conditions as described by the NSTU, I do not believe that to be possible. Please let me know if you require any additional information.
SRSB	The Strait Regional School Board has significant concerns regarding student supervision and safety should all NSTU members follow the directives as outlined in the NSTU's "Work to Rule 2016" booklet. This includes 20 minutes before class, 20 minutes after class, recess and lunch time as student supervision in the Strait Board is done primarily by NSTU members. In addition, some of our students travel over an hour on bus to and from school, and with school administrators not being available until 20 minutes before and after class creates a definite safety concern. Even though my staff is working hard on contingency planning to mitigate safety risks for Monday, December 5, 2016, it is my belief, that, under the current

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	restrictions as outlined in the NSTU's "Work to Rule 2016" booklet, I do not believe that we can maintain a safe school environment for our students. Thank you for involving superintendents in the consultation and contingency planning process. All the best!
SSRSB	We have several concerns related to student safety and security in SSRSB related to the WTR strike. In our view, the ability for us to maintain and ensure a safe, orderly and supportive learning environment in all schools in the region is impossible to guarantee under the working expectations for NSTU members as described in the WTR 2016 document. Setting the negative impacts to student program, supports and services aside, details related to basic safety and security of students are very difficult to address. Basically, we are trying to manage what we don't know could happen and that is impossible to mitigate. The absence of certainty in having a school administrator available at all times is causing the level of risk to rise substantially. For example, while we are able to maintain busing with the 20 minutes window of teacher supervision, we can't control parents who drop children off early or older students who may come to school early on there own. Likewise, the same concern exists at dismissal. To add further complexity to the supervision matter, we hare doing our best to supervise student lunch periods and high school breaks with non-NSTU staff. We are very fragile in this area and have to seek out community volunteers to provide a very thin coverage over these times. Our noon hour supervision is very limited and we are concerned staff not experienced in this type of responsibility may in fact refuse to provide the service, or at no fault of there own because of a lack of training, experience or knowledge of student behaviour, cause a situation to escalate when it otherwise may not have done so. Regarding bus drop off after school for our younger students, many students are on the bus past the 20 minute allowable supervision window. Under normal conditions, the principal is an integral component of the plan if an adult is not at the stop to receive the young students. Under the WTR, the Principal is no longer able to provide that safety support. We are worried about this eventually. We currently have one school with e teacher-in-charge. We understand this is not permitted under the WTR strike. We have a concern about the security of cash and other funds that flow through the school. Electronic tracking of student attendance allows us to inform parents / guardians when their child is absent through the Alert system. Under the WTR, this safety

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	measure will not be available and it is possible for a student to be missing for the whole school day. We believe there to be additional safety and security concerns related to critical information such as parent / guardian custody or medical information that temporary staff will not have immediate access to. I hope it is helpful we have provided some practical examples of our safety and security concerns. In summation, I believe we should give serious consideration to close schools due to uncertainty and safety concerns due to the conditions described in the WTR.
TCRSB	Some of TCRSB concerns regarding student safety should all NSTU member employees follow the directives as set out in NSTU's "Work to Rule 2016" booklet would be the following: • Students travel distances on busses after school which would be longer than 20 minutes – the principal now would be the immediate contact with the family and would have all of the student contact information – if principals are not available past 20 minutes at the end of the school day this is a risk • If principals/Vice-principals are not overseeing the safety of all students in the building this will be a grave concern even with noon time supervisors in place • With 10 schools without Vice-principals - not having the capability to appointment a Teacher in Charge if the principal is absent is a concern • Not entering attendance into PowerSchool (especially at High Schools where attendance is taken at every class) poses risk for situations such as evacuations when students may not be accounted for in a timely manner through the office • Principals are the main contact for community groups using the schools – if principals are only available for 20 minutes at the end of the day overall security of the building is a risk • Supervision during high school recess – difficult to have supervisors come in for short periods of times The focus of all of our contingency planning discussions has been student safety. With the uncertainty regarding all NSTU member employees following the directives as set out in NSTU's "Work to Rule 2016" and possible safety risks as a result, I would think that closing schools to students should be considered. Please let know if you require any further clarification. Thanks Lisa **Follow-Up Response:** TCRSB has many concerns regarding student supervision and safety should all NSTU member employees follow the directives as set out in NSTU's "Work to Rule 2016" booklet. We have students who travel distances on busses after school which would be longer than 20 minutes after the end of the school day. The principal

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	would currently have all of the student contact information and be the immediate contact with the family. If principals are not available past 20 minutes at the end of the school day this is a serious risk. Most of our noon supervision is done by non NSTU staff. Supervision during high school recess is posing a challenge as it is difficult to find supervisors who are willing to come in for short periods of time. However, if principals/Vice-principals are not overseeing the safety of all students in the building this will be a grave concern even with those noon time supervisors in place. TCRSB has 10 schools without Vice-principals. According to the "Work to Rule" booklet we will not have the capability to appointment a Teacher in Charge if the principal is absent. It is not safe to have a school remain open without someone in that position. There are concerns regarding teachers not entering attendance into PowerSchool. Tracking students is extremely important. At High Schools where attendance is taken at every class. There is safety risk associated with emergency procedures such as evacuations when students may not be accounted for in a timely manner through the office. Principals are the main contact for community groups using the schools when the schools do not community use agreements. With principals to be available for any contact only 20 minutes at the end of the day overall security of the buildings is a concern. The focus of all of our contingency planning discussions has been student safety. With the uncertainty regarding all NSTU member employees following the directives as set out in NSTU's "Work to Rule 2016" and possible safety risks as a result, I feel that closing schools to students should be considered. Please let know if you require any further clarification. Thank you for the ongoing collaboration. Lisa