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April 28, 2026

Wattie Watson
National Secretary
PO Box 38213
Wellington Mail Centre
Lower Hutt 5045

Dear National Secretary Watson,

Thank you for your thoughtful response regarding the inaugural IAFF Strive for Excellence Summit. While we certainly missed the presence of you and your delegation, we fully understand and respect the circumstances that required your leadership at home.

On behalf of the more than 365,000 members of the International Association of Fire Fighters, General Secretary-Treasurer Lima, and the IAFF Executive Board, I want to express our full solidarity with you, President Joseph Stanley, Vice President Martin Campbell, and the members of the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union as you stand firm in defense of the fundamental rights of firefighters. Your decision to remain on the front lines with your members during such a critical moment speaks volumes about your leadership and your unwavering commitment to those you serve.

We recognize the seriousness of the issues you have outlined, from the fight for safe staffing levels and reliable equipment to the broader legal and legislative challenges that threaten not only your members, but the rights of workers more broadly. The courage demonstrated by your membership, particularly the overwhelming support for continued industrial action, reflects a deep understanding that this struggle is about securing a safer and more just future for generations to come.

We are also deeply concerned by the legal challenges facing members of your National Committee and the legislative environment negatively impacting workers' rights. The freedom of firefighters to advocate collectively for safe workplaces and fair treatment is fundamental, and any effort to undermine that liberty should concern the entire global fire service community.

Please know that the IAFF stands firmly with you during this struggle. The courage and unity shown by your members exemplify the spirit of solidarity that binds firefighters worldwide.

We wish you strength and success in the days ahead and look forward to a time when we can gather again in person.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if there are additional ways we can support you during this fight.

Be You. Be Strong. Be Fire Fighters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward A. Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "E".

Edward A. Kelly
General President