

Regulatory Standards Bill 2025

Explainer & Submission Guide

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Guide to Making a Submission

This submission guide is for those wishing to put some thought into making a personal submission, which can have more impact. Alternatively, simple submission builders are available online.

The Regulatory Standards Bill (RSB) is being presented as being about “good law making” and “economic efficiency”, and as a way to improve regulation and productivity in New Zealand. But it would be harmful to most people, our country, the environment and the economy. The RSB will affect everyone - families, workers, businesses, communities, iwi and hapū.

New Zealanders need to ask themselves whether they want ACT’s ideals to restrain the actions of future governments even when ACT is no longer in power. It is about the kind of society and environment we want to live in, and what we want future generations to inherit. Law-making should be a non-partisan process, not captured by the interests of a minority party.

Here’s a guide to help you make a submission that speaks to your concerns, whether they are personal, general, or detailed.

What is happening now?

- **This is the time to speak up.** Submissions to the select committee on the [Regulatory Standards Bill 2025](#) close at **1pm on Monday 23 June 2025**.
- **Every voice counts** in showing the government that this Bill does not serve the people of New Zealand.
- **Even if it is passed, a strong show of submissions now will make it easier for future governments to fight against it.**
- [Submit your thoughts here before 1pm Monday 23 June 2025.](#)

Suggested Types of Submissions - explained in more detail later below

- [1. Personal stories about why regulation matters](#)
- [2. Simple submissions opposing the Bill](#)
- [3. Transfer submissions from the Treaty Principles Bill](#)
- [4. Complex Submissions: Write your own thoughts and analysis, drawing on your expertise and mātauranga, in whatever format you want](#)

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Types of Submissions

1. Personal stories about why regulation matters

Your personal experience is powerful. Tell the government how good regulation protects you, your whānau, and your community. Share personal stories about when regulation has failed and why having strong regulations is important to avoid those issues (e.g. deaths and injury at work, leaky buildings, investment losses).

- **Example:** *"Without strong environmental rules, our local river would be too polluted for my kids to swim in. Weakening regulation puts our health and environment at risk."*
- **Possible scenarios:** Health and safety at work, fair wages, clean water, safe housing, petrol prices, or the cost of groceries. There are many more!

2. Simple submissions opposing the Bill

It's okay to keep it short. Clearly state that you oppose the Bill and why. You can suggest alternatives that focus on our people being able to maintain democratic decision making, making sure our assets and resources are managed by our country for the benefit of all of us and/or the environment, and upholding Te Tiriti.

- **Example:** *"I oppose the proposed Regulatory Standards Bill. It prioritises big business over people and the environment. Instead, we need regulations that protect New Zealand's resources, our whānau, and future generations."*

3. Transfer submissions from the Treaty Principles Bill

If you have already made a submission on the Treaty Principles Bill, much of your argument will apply here. Both Bills threaten the legal impact of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and prioritise individual (and corporate) rights over collective responsibilities.

Overview: The proposed RSB could remove Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the common law Treaty principles from our law making processes and the delivery of public services. This would have many similar impacts to the Treaty Principles Bill, which would remove the legal impact of Te Tiriti and its principles from the interpretation of our laws. It is important that you state that you oppose the RSB and why you think it is important to honour Te Tiriti within our lawmaking.

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- **Example:** Highlight how the RSB fails to protect Treaty rights and collective ownership of resources like whenua and wai. Explain why it is important to you that these rights and interests are protected.
- **Example:** *"This proposed Bill does not recognise Te Tiriti o Waitangi, rights guaranteed to Māori such as rangatiratanga and the exercise of kaitiakitanga. It is at odds with our founding document. It risks undermining Māori tino rangatiratanga and ignores the role of regulation in protecting shared resources."*

4. Complex Submissions: Write your own thoughts and analysis, drawing on your expertise and mātauranga, in whatever format you want

You can simply create your own submission in the way you want. Focus on your areas of interest or expertise, your community/hapū/iwi, or the sector you or your organisation are involved in. Talk to others, listen to podcasts and read published analyses to work through what the implications of the RSB are for the things you care about. This could be anything from workers rights to social equity to Te Tiriti and Indigenous rights and interests to the environment to the building industry to how the space industry operates. And everything in between. Remember, this is the "Everything Bill".

Key Areas to Address in Your Submission

Here are some of the most important points to include:

Must include!

1. **A little bit about you:** If you have relevant background, interests, skills etc. let them know.
2. **Opposition to the Bill:** Clearly state that you oppose the RSB, ask for it to be abandoned and ideally also explain why.

Optional pick 'n mix or design your own

3. **Amendments to the Bill:** As well as asking for the Bill to be abandoned, you can ask that if it passes certain amendments are made to it.
4. **Short summary of your submission:** This can make it easier for the committee to read.
5. **State why you care:** Make it personal! Tell stories from the heart.
6. **Impact on you and your family:** Share personal stories or concerns—e.g. cost of living, job security, environmental protection, or Te Tiriti rights.

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7. **The principles:** Challenge the Bill's focus on individualistic, corporate and property rights and liberties over the public good and environmental protections.
8. **Object to the Regulatory Standards Board:** Explain how this could give too much power to corporations and wealthy lobbyists to pressure government. State that the balancing of interests should remain with elected representatives.
9. **Object to the powers being given to the Minister for Regulation:** The Minister will be empowered to call for investigations, issue guidelines on interpretation of the principles and assess the performance of the regulatory system. They will also be empowered to request information from government departments, councils, the Reserve Bank and third party providers with failure to comply being a contempt of court.
10. **Alternatives:** Suggest alternatives, like improving existing systems (e.g., strengthening Parliamentary oversight, strengthening the role of the Legislation Design and Advisory Committee's Legislation Guidelines) rather than introducing this harmful Bill.
11. **Te Tiriti compliance:** State that the proposed Bill is fundamentally inconsistent with Te Tiriti o Waitangi and should be stopped. It will further marginalise Māori rights and values. Expand on the consequences and your concerns about this.
12. **New Zealand Bill of Rights:** State that any Bill must include the New Zealand Bill of Rights as a central principle.
13. **Object to the "takings clause":** Highlight the financial risk to us all and to government—the Bill could lead to laws requiring rate-payers, taxpayers, environmental groups, iwi and others pay billions to corporations if regulations affect their property rights (e.g., sea-level rise, mining).
14. **Uncertainty:** The RSB, if passed, would create huge uncertainty as it would open up significant litigation on its effects, lead to the rewriting of many of our laws and increase judicial reviews. This is bad for business and the economy. Share your concerns about this.
15. **Deregulation:** Regulation and laws are there to protect and balance everybody's rights and interests, look after our safety, health, education and environment. Extensive deregulation would fundamentally change life as we know it. Share your thoughts on extensive deregulation.
16. **It is unnecessary and is not good regulation:** The Bill does not meet its own standards. There are alternative approaches to improving regulation that would be much cheaper and non-partisan.
17. **This Bill is anti-democratic:** It prioritises the interests of corporations and the wealthy, taking power away from communities and Parliament. It shifts power away from Parliament whose

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role it is to balance different interests, to the Executive, centering power in the Ministry for Regulation, and to the non-elected Regulatory Standards Board.

If you want more detailed information...

Overview of the Regulatory Standards Bill 2025

The Regulatory Standards Bill (RSB) 2025 could fundamentally reshape everything in Aotearoa New Zealand. It affects everyone — our environment, our rights, our ability to govern in the public interest, and the influence of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Its bland title hides its sweeping implications, but if passed, it would:

- 1) Establish a set of 'principles' — focused on property rights and the rights of individuals and corporations — that most laws and regulations would be expected to follow.
- 2) Severely constrain governments from acting in ways that conflict with those principles, even where the public good would justify it.
- 3) Lock in these constraints for future governments, making it difficult — and potentially expensive — to reverse them without compensating corporate interests.
- 4) Limit the government's ability to raise taxes on high income earners to fund public services or social protections.
- 5) Allow any person or corporation to challenge laws or regulations they believe breach these principles, via a new *Regulatory Standards Board* — which would only consider the Bill's principles, not broader considerations (unlike the courts).
- 6) Hand considerable power to the Minister for Regulation (currently David Seymour) to interpret and influence how the Bill is applied, and pressure other government departments.
- 7) Be prioritised over Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the New Zealand Bill of Rights when making laws — and could in practice displace them.
- 8) Lead to the stripping away of many of the protections that help keep New Zealanders safe, healthy, and supported — including in areas like healthcare, education, and fair working conditions.
- 9) And that's just the beginning.

A bad idea from the 1980's neoliberal reforms...

The Regulatory Standards Bill (RSB) has a long and controversial history. Since the 1990s, there have been four failed attempts to pass it. Its supporters, driven by free-market and libertarian ideologies,

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aim to reduce the role and accountability of government — prioritising property rights, corporate interests, and individual freedoms over public wellbeing, environmental protection, and collective responsibility.

Critics argue that the Bill threatens core New Zealand values. It could undermine public services, deepen inequality, and weaken safeguards for people and the environment.

Despite its history of rejection and being widely regarded as extreme, the RSB is now back — included in the ACT-National coalition agreement, which promises to pass it into law during this term. However, the agreement does *not* specify the Bill's contents. It simply commits to:

“Legislate to improve the quality of regulation, ensuring that regulatory decisions are based on principles of good law-making and economic efficiency, by passing the Regulatory Standards Act as soon as practicable.”

This leaves room for significant change. While ACT wants their version of “good law-making” and “economic efficiency” — focused on deregulation and corporate interests — to be locked into the Bill. However, that is not required by the coalition agreement.

National and NZ First could still meet their coalition commitment — while changing the Bill's content.

That's why submissions matter. Tell the Finance and Expenditure Committee what must change before the Bill is passed. And write to your MP to let them know what's at stake.

Why this matters

New Zealand considers itself a fair, just & reasonable nation. But this Bill does not uphold those values.

The Regulatory Standards Bill would hand new powers to private interests — powers they have not been granted by the public. It would allow corporations and wealthy individuals to challenge laws designed to protect the public good, society, the environment, or Te Tiriti o Waitangi — via the Regulatory Standards Board — simply because those laws might reduce their profits.

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A legacy of neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a model of government that puts business interests ahead of people and the environment. Since the 1980s, this approach has made the wealthy wealthier, while eroding public services and deepening inequality.

The RSB risks completing what the 1980s neoliberal reforms began — stripping away protections and leaving people and communities more exposed.

Tens of thousands of people lost their jobs during those reforms — including many who had voted for the very government that introduced them. Businesses that had taken generations to build were lost overnight. People's retirement savings disappeared. And none of it was their fault.

We're at risk of repeating that history.

What's at stake

The Bill ignores our founding document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It sidelines collective responsibilities and the practice of kaitiakitanga — care, protection, and stewardship of our environment. Today, Te Tiriti is a cornerstone of our law-making process through tools like the Legislation Design and Advisory Committee (LDAC) Manual, which recognises it as a foundational constitutional document.

Under the RSB, Te Tiriti would be excluded from the process of "good law-making" and "responsible regulation". However, simply adding it in as a reference would not be enough to fix the deeper problems with the Bill.

The Bill also threatens environmental protections. If passed, it could pave the way for unchecked development, resource exploitation, and pollution — with no meaningful mechanisms left to prioritise long-term wellbeing over short-term profit.

What do the principles of the Bill mean?

The **Regulatory Standards Bill 2025** proposes a set of principles that most legislation and regulation should be consistent with. It outlines that new laws and regulations should comply with these principles, and enables the review of most existing laws for consistency with the RSB principles.

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At their core, these principles reflect a libertarian or neoliberal worldview — prioritising private property rights, individual and corporate interests, and tightly restricting the role of government. The full list of proposed principles is set out in the Bill itself.

The full set of principles being proposed can be [viewed in the Bill](#) online.

Here's an overview of some key principles and what they could mean in practice:

- **Equality before the law:** While this may sound fair, it risks entrenching existing inequalities. Treating everyone the same on paper often protects those who already hold wealth and power (e.g. property owners), while restricting efforts to address disadvantage — such as affirmative action or policies grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- **Limits on government discretion:** The Bill would sharply limit how governments make decisions in the public interest. Future governments could find themselves unable to respond flexibly to new challenges or community needs.
- **Extreme focus on individual and property rights:** The Bill elevates individual and corporate rights — especially property rights — above all else. These could only be limited to protect another person's rights. Governments would no longer be free to weigh competing interests such as environmental protection, social equity, or Te Tiriti obligations.
- **Restrictions on taxes, fees, and levies:** These would reduce the government's ability to raise revenue for essential services like healthcare, education, and infrastructure — further embedding inequality.
- **Limits on ministers and departments:** The Bill would increase the ability for government decisions to be challenged, particularly where individual or property rights are claimed to be affected, and narrow the discretion of ministers and departments to act in the public interest.
- **Mass deregulation via a narrow definition of 'regulatory stewardship':** The Bill assumes less regulation is better regulation. This could lead to sweeping cuts in standards that currently protect people and the environment.
- **Compensation for 'impairment' of property:** The Bill includes a clause that legislation should offer 'fair compensation' whenever it impairs the use or value of private property — even if that action serves the public good. This goes beyond what's in most New Zealand law today and resembles provisions in trade agreements we've previously refused to sign. It could mean the government would be pressured to compensate developers, mining companies, or other corporate interests for lost profits when new protections are introduced.

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What does “individual” or “person” mean in this Bill?

In most areas of government, decisions are made with the public interest in mind — considering what’s best for *all of us*. But the **Regulatory Standards Bill (RSB)** focuses on protecting individual interests — and in this Bill, the terms “individual” or “person” include not only everyday citizens, but also corporations, large businesses, and other legal entities.

It does *not* include “the public,” specific communities, or society as a whole.

This means powerful companies would be granted the same rights and protections as individuals under the RSB — and in practice, even greater power, because they have the resources to challenge laws and enforce their claims.

Under this framework, corporations could argue that regulations — even those aimed at protecting public health, the environment, or community wellbeing — unfairly infringe on their “rights.”

For example:

- The Bill includes a **“fair compensation”** clause. If a law or regulation limits the ability of a business to make profits — such as restricting mining in sensitive areas, banning tobacco advertising, or strengthening worker protections — that business could complain that their property or commercial interests have been “taken” or “impaired”.
- They could then pressure that that law or regulation should provide for compensation — potentially costing taxpayers, ratepayers, or local communities billions of dollars if this was agreed to.
- The Bill says compensation should be paid by those who benefit — so that cost could fall on environmental groups, iwi, neighbours opposing a development, or ultimately, the government and all of us as taxpayers.

This approach shifts power toward those with the greatest legal and financial muscle — and makes it much harder to act collectively for the common good.

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Rights of the Individual vs. Corporate Interests

While the Regulatory Standards Bill (RSB) claims to uphold “individual rights” and “property rights,” its real-world effect would be to disproportionately benefit wealthy individuals and corporations.

The Bill creates mechanisms — including a new *Regulatory Standards Board* — that enable individuals or entities to challenge laws they believe are inconsistent with the Bill’s principles. In practice, this invites corporate actors to undermine essential public protections by claiming that regulations impose “unnecessary costs” or “limit freedoms.”

This setup closely resembles the *Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS)* systems used in international free trade agreements. New Zealand stopped agreeing to ISDS clauses around 2016 due to widespread concerns that they:

- Privileged private interests over public good and legitimate government action
- Lacked transparency and public accountability
- Failed to follow normal legal standards like precedent or the participation of affected communities

These mechanisms became known as “**motel room justice**” — where powerful actors could negotiate outcomes behind closed doors, without considering the broader public, the environment, or the national interest.

We rejected this model in international agreements. Why would we adopt it domestically?

In reality, the threat of such challenges alone can deter governments from taking responsible action. There is well-documented evidence of corporations using legal disputes not necessarily to win, but to *delay* regulation and drain public resources.

For example: if tobacco companies can use the dispute process to stall a new restriction for a decade, that delay is a commercial win — even if they lose the case in the end. The public pays the price while the corporation profits.

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Example: A Mining Company

Imagine a mining company operating under a long-term licence in an area that has since been recognised as ecologically significant — where the activity endangers endangered species or threatens water quality for nearby communities.

If the government introduced new rules to protect biodiversity or prevent toxic runoff, the company could claim that these rules “impair” their property rights and pressure the government to provide **fair compensation** for lost profits under those new rules. Under the Regulatory Standards Bill, this financial burden could fall on taxpayers, ratepayers, or those advocating for protection — making environmental regulation too expensive to pursue.

The result? Sensitive ecosystems could be left unprotected, and the wellbeing of future generations sacrificed to avoid legal and financial risk.

Example: A Tobacco Company

If the government introduced stronger restrictions on tobacco advertising to reduce smoking rates and associated illnesses, tobacco companies could argue that such rules infringe on their rights to market their products. They could pressure the government to provide **compensation** for lost revenue under those laws, or lay a complaint with the Regulatory Standards Board.

This isn't hypothetical — it has already happened. Tobacco giant **Philip Morris** sued the Australian government under an international trade agreement when Australia introduced **plain packaging laws** for cigarettes. The company claimed the new rules unlawfully took their intellectual property — the imagery and branding they wanted on cigarette packets. Australia ultimately won the case, but it was a lengthy, costly legal battle.

Under the RSB, such complaints could be launched *within New Zealand*, undermining public health policies designed to protect people — while putting profits ahead of wellbeing.

How this impacts everyday citizens

These examples show how the Regulatory Standards Bill could shift power and resources away from ordinary New Zealanders — and hand them to corporations and wealthy interests. Here's what that could mean for you, your whānau, and your community:

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- **More individualism, less unity:** The Bill replaces New Zealand's values of fairness, care, and community with libertarian ideas focused on individualism, corporate power, and market efficiency.
- **Less fairness:** The rights and interests of the wealthy and powerful would be protected, while efforts to reduce inequality or support marginalised groups would face new legal and financial barriers — entrenching the status quo.
- **Higher taxes:** Taxpayers could end up footing the bill for corporate compensation when regulations are introduced to protect public health, the environment, or community wellbeing, if takings clauses are included as the RSB recommends. Public money could be diverted from essential services to pay for corporate claims.
- **Weaker protections:** Governments may avoid introducing new rules if they fear being challenged publicly under the Bill's principles. This could lead to weaker safeguards for clean drinking water, safe housing, fair wages, and healthy workplaces.
- **Loss of democratic power:** Large corporations or powerful individuals could challenge laws designed to serve the public good, through complaints to the Regulatory Standards Board. This political force undermines the role of Parliament and the public's voice in decision-making.
- **Reduced legal accountability:** The courts — which currently play a key role in holding government to account — would be sidelined. Instead, complaints would go to the Regulatory Standards Board, which is less independent, less transparent, and less open to community input.
- **Environmental and public health risks:** Businesses could block or overturn new rules on climate change, pollution, or health protections — prioritising short-term profits over long-term needs.
- **Fewer public services:** Restrictions on tax and revenue-raising powers would make it harder for government to fund the services we all rely on — such as healthcare, education, public housing, and emergency response.

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How did we get here?

Early 2000s: The Idea Was Born

The Regulatory Standards Bill (RSB) is the legacy of unfinished business from the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s — aimed at permanently limiting the power of government to make laws and regulations in the public interest.

The RSB was first developed by economist **Bryce Wilkinson** for the **Business Roundtable** — a lobby group with strong ties to big business, now known as the **New Zealand Initiative**. These groups promote free-market ideologies, arguing for fewer government restrictions so businesses and wealthy individuals can operate with minimal oversight — even if that comes at the expense of workers, the environment, or public wellbeing.

The RSB is grounded in **libertarian economic thinking**: the belief that private property and corporate freedom matter more than community, fairness, or care for the environment.

Multiple Attempts — and Rejections

The Business Roundtable published a draft version of the Bill under the name **Regulatory Responsibility Bill**.

- In **2006**, ACT introduced it to Parliament. It failed.
- In **2009**, ACT's **Rodney Hide** and National's **Bill English** set up a **Regulatory Responsibility Taskforce** to advance the idea.
- ACT tried again in **2011** and **2021**, rebranding the proposal as the **Regulatory Standards Bill**. Each time, it was rejected.

Across these attempts, the Bill received widespread criticism. It was opposed by Labour, the Greens, many legal experts, and even **Treasury** and government departments. Critics said it posed a **serious constitutional risk** — giving corporate interests new powers, while undermining environmental protection, public wellbeing, the New Zealand Bill of Rights, and **Te Tiriti o Waitangi**.

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The Bill was consistently seen as **too extreme and out of step with New Zealand values**. Its core idea — restricting governments from acting for the common good — was viewed as a threat to democracy and a move toward greater inequality.

Examples of what could happen if the Bill passes... this is only the beginning!

1. Higher Cost of Living

- **Weaker regulation** could allow supermarkets, energy companies, and other large corporations to raise prices unchecked — making it harder to challenge monopolies and protect consumers.
 - **Fewer protections for workers** may lead to lower wages, less job security, and reduced workplace safety standards.
 - **Rates could rise** as property developers demand that local councils cover infrastructure costs as part of investment agreements — costs that are then passed on to ratepayers.
-

2. Environmental Harm

- The government could struggle to pass laws that limit property rights to protect public or environmental goods — such as restoring **swimmable rivers** or addressing **climate change**.
 - Environmental rules could be rolled back, allowing more **pollution, overfishing, or destructive mining** projects to go ahead.
 - Climate change responses could be **blocked or delayed** if businesses argue that restrictions on development (e.g. in flood-prone areas) reduce their profits — triggering pressure to include clauses for “fair compensation” in the laws progressing those responses.
-

3. Undermining Te Tiriti o Waitangi

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- The Bill **ignores Te Tiriti** and the collective rights of Māori to land, water, and other taonga. It prioritises private property rights, weakening **kaitiakitanga** (guardianship) and **tino rangatiratanga** (self-determination).
 - **Whānau, hapū, and iwi** could have less ability to protect whenua from exploitation by corporations.
 - By prioritising “individual rights” and “equality before the law” as the only acceptable standards, the Bill could **block affirmative action, equity measures**, or any **recognition of Indigenous and Treaty rights** in future laws and regulations.
-

4. Rising Fuel Prices and Everyday Costs

- The Bill could enable corporations to **challenge consumer protection rules**, such as price caps on petrol or essential services — arguing they interfere with free-market profits and should be compensated.
 - This could lead to faster price increases for transport, heating, and daily essentials.
-

5. Corporate Power Over Public Interest

- Corporations and wealthy individuals could use the Bill to **challenge laws** that protect workers, renters, or vulnerable communities — if those laws are seen as limiting profits.
 - **Lobbyists and special interest groups** would gain new tools to pressure governments, block reforms, and entrench policies that benefit the few over the many.
-

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Example scenarios and sentences

You're welcome to use or adapt these in your submission — or write your own. Real stories and concerns make a difference.

Personal Stories

- *"I live near a river that's finally safe to swim in thanks to strong environmental protections. This Bill could roll back that progress."*
- *"Someone in my family died in a preventable workplace accident. If anything, we need stronger regulation — not rules that protect businesses over people."*
- *"I run a small business and I support fair rules. This Bill favours big corporations who can afford lawyers — not everyday New Zealanders."*
- *"As a parent, I rely on public healthcare and decent schools. If this Bill passes, funding those services could get even harder."*

Simple Opposition

- *"I oppose the Regulatory Standards Bill. It puts profits ahead of people and weakens the protections we all depend on."*
- *"This Bill gives too much power to corporations and takes it away from communities and elected representatives."*
- *"It's wrong to prioritise property rights over public health, the environment, and fairness."*

Treaty Principles Submission Transfer

- *"I oppose this Bill because it ignores Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Māori rights must be upheld in all law-making."*
- *"The Bill promotes individualism and private property rights, which clash with collective Māori values and responsibilities like kaitiakitanga."*
- *"This Bill would make it harder for Māori to protect land and water. That's not the future we want for Aotearoa."*
- *"Regulation must respect Te Tiriti and the Crown's obligations. This Bill removes that foundation."*

More Detailed or Complex Submissions

- *"The proposed principles are ideologically biased. They elevate economic efficiency and property rights over public interest, equity, and environmental sustainability."*
- *"Giving corporations the expectation of compensation for lost profits, even when regulation is in the public interest, is dangerous and unfair."*

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- *“The Regulatory Standards Board would operate outside the usual checks and balances — creating a parallel system of legal review that benefits only the powerful.”*
 - *“The Bill undermines democratic decision-making. It shifts power from the public and Parliament to private actors with narrow interests.”*
 - *“Laws must serve everyone, not just those with property and power. This Bill fails that basic test of fairness.”*
-

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