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Plain Language Summary for

Bill 59: An Act to Amend the Elections and Plebiscites Act

The Member for Hay River South is sponsoring a bill that amends the *Elections and Plebiscites Act*. The bill proposes some changes to the Act. These are being made on the recommendation of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) and the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedure. If passed, the changes will be in place for the next general election in 2023.

Some changes relate to the register of electors (voters list). If the bill is passed, Elections NWT will be able to share information from the voters list with municipalities running elections, and the Electoral Boundaries Commission. Sixteen and 17 year-olds will be able to register with Elections NWT, and automatically be added to the voters list on their 18th birthday. The bill will also allow emails to be kept as part of the voters list. Finally, the CEO will be able to get information from public bodies to help keep the voters list current.

Other changes in the bill will mean that returning officers will no longer post the home address of candidates and official agents. Instead they will post what community they live in. The bill changes the start day of advance polling from 24 to 21 days before an election. The bill makes a number of changes to set deadlines based on business days rather than calendar days. This ensures all reporting deadlines fall on a regular business day.

In terms of polling stations, the bill makes some minor changes including removing the need for two electors to witness the count, requiring returning officers to report if they appoint a police officer to maintain security at a polling station, and allowing the CEO to provide direction on the use of cell phones at polling stations.

The bill creates an election rebate program which allows a candidate who is acclaimed or receives five percent or more of the votes cast to apply for a rebate of some of their personal money spent on their campaign. Candidates will not be able to get a rebate for any personal funds they contribute that is eligible for a tax rebate under tax laws.

The bill includes specific information that must be included in regulations if online voting is being used for absentee ballots.

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