



TOWN OF WATSON LAKE

the official community newsletter of the Municipality of Watson Lake
VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 1 | 1st Quarter of 2025

the town
website



Scan to access:
watsonlake.ca

FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

With winter fading and the warmth of spring approaching, Mayor and Council continue to prepare for the work that lies ahead. Over the past few months, we have been settling into our roles, learning, and laying the groundwork for key initiatives that will benefit Watson Lake.

Following the November municipal election, we've attended essential elected officials training in Whitehorse. This provided us with important professional development, networking opportunities, and a deeper understanding of our responsibilities as decision-makers and representatives of Watson Lake. We anticipate attending more opportunities like these to strengthen the skills required to fulfill our roles and to ensure that we can serve the community effectively.

One challenge that Mayor and Council face is the Town of Watson Lake's fiscal year budget process, where every dollar allocated is vital for the community's growth and maintenance. Administration also works to ensure that the Town can utilize available funding sources throughout Canada to help reduce financial strain and support the operations and maintenance (O&M) budget, while also ensuring sustainable development through infrastructure projects outlined in the capital budget.

We appreciate the Yukon Government's commitment to municipal funding, reflected in a notable increase of over \$330,000 to Watson Lake's Comprehensive Municipal Grant (CMG); the largest adjustment since 1991. This funding strengthens our ability to maintain essential services such as clean drinking water, waste management, snow clearing, and recreation while reducing the financial burden on residents.

In January, we were able to engage with the community during the town hall meeting to discuss the budget, and bylaws under review. We appreciate the valuable insights coming from you, Mayor and Council looks forward to continued conversations to ensure that our town's priorities align with community needs.

Looking ahead, Mayor and Council will be working with planning experts and consultants to develop a comprehensive four-year strategic plan. This plan aims to establish clear goals and priorities to guide decision-making and future investments in Watson Lake.

We are also focused on securing funding for our ongoing, multi-phase infrastructure projects. One major priority is obtaining support through the Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund (CHIF) to begin Phase 1B of the in-ground infrastructure project, addressing our aging water and sewer systems.

With housing remaining a pressing concern, we encourage property owners to explore opportunities through the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF). This program provides grants ranging from \$40,000 to \$120,000 to support the creation of new housing. Phase II applications are open until March 31, 2025, for property owners with underutilized or vacant lots. Alongside this, Council decided to reaccept applications for Phase I of the HAF grant for eligible property owners in Watson Lake to create dwellings. Please note that accepting intakes for Phase II takes precedence over Phase I applicants.

Mayor and Council extend our appreciation to Administration and staff for their hard work in supporting these initiatives and ensuring smooth operations for Watson Lake.

As we move forward, we encourage residents to stay involved and collaborate with Mayor and Council. We thank you for your continued support and look forward to working together for the future of Watson Lake.

Lauren Hanchar
Mayor
Town of Watson Lake

Balancing the Books:

Understanding the process in Budget and Property Tax Administration in Watson Lake.

Each year, the Town of Watson Lake carefully plans its budget to make sure that the community receives essential services like road maintenance, emergency response, and the continuous operations of recreational facilities. In most municipalities, including Watson Lake, the municipal budget serves as both a financial plan and a policy document. This guides how the administration allocates resources based on projected revenues and expenditures.

The Budget Process

There are three crucial steps in getting the budget ready for the Town's Fiscal Year: Preparation, Adoption, and Implementation. During the preparation phase, the town administration compiles revenue estimates and departmental funding requests based on service needs and financial constraints. The Town Council then reviews, debates,

and approves (adopts) the final budget to ensure fiscal responsibility and maintain quality services. Lastly, the budget is put into action, and regular financial monitoring is conducted to ensure that the funds are spent efficiently and effectively. Municipalities primarily fund their budgets through property taxes, user fees and government transfers.

Why Property Taxes Change in Watson Lake

Property taxes are calculated based on two key factors:

Property Tax=

Land Assessment Value x Mill Rate

The Land Assessment Value is determined by the Yukon Government, and varies based on land value and improvements (buildings) on the property. These two factors are assessed every two years. The tax rate, or mill rate, on the other hand, is set by the Town Council and is aimed at generating the necessary revenue to help maintain or contribute to the rising costs of providing municipal services.

This year, like everyone else, the municipality faces rising costs in goods necessary for the Town's daily operations, subject but not limited to inflation, increasing fuel prices and maintenance costs. Watson Lake is committed on maintaining these high-quality services, and to achieve this, the Town Council decided to increase the mill rate by 1% to the previous year's tax levy to ensure that the essential services the municipality provides remain unchanged.

The Town of Watson Lake recognizes that no tax increase is ever popular, but as municipal costs continue to rise, increased expenditure means that the Town must keep the budget balanced while providing vital services to the community. The Town of Watson Lake operates with the highest levels of financial transparency and accountability. Budget discussions include public consultation opportunities, and the Council continues to manage costs efficiently to ensure long-term sustainability.

Residential Mill Rate

$$1.45\% \text{ (year 2024)} \times 1\% \text{ (1\% of 2024 tax rate)} \rightarrow 1.465\% \text{ (year 2025)}$$

Non-Residential Mill Rate

$$2.05\% \text{ (year 2024)} \times 1\% \text{ (1\% of 2024 tax rate)} \rightarrow 2.071\% \text{ (year 2025)}$$

Vacant Commercial Mill Rate

$$3.942\% \text{ (year 2024)} \times 1\% \text{ (1\% of 2024 tax rate)} \rightarrow 3.982\% \text{ (year 2025)}$$

Figure 1: Residential, Non-Residential and Vacant Commercial Tax rate computation for year 2025



Town of Watson Lake Inclusive Playgrounds Project Summer 2025

No Child Left Behind

photo courtesy: play envy

This summer, Watson Lake is taking a giant leap toward inclusivity with the renovation and installation of three accessible playgrounds. The upgrades will transform the Dennis Ball Memorial Pool playground, the Teslin Crescent playground, and introduce a brand-new play space at Wye Lake Park.

Unlike traditional playgrounds, these new designs prioritize accessibility and inclusivity, ensuring that children of all abilities can play together. Sensory elements, ground-level play structures, and accessible swings will offer a welcoming space for kids with mobility challenges, vision or hearing impairments, and neurodiverse needs.

"We're building spaces where every child can experience the joy of play," said project representatives from Play Envy,

"From thrilling rides, inclusive play equipment, to calming hammocks, there's something for everyone."

These playgrounds will foster social connections, encourage physical activity, and create a space where every child regardless of ability feels they belong. This is a step by Watson Lake to prove that play should have no barriers, making this summer project one of the most exciting yet for families across the community.

Bylaws Under Review

The Town of Watson Lake is reviewing the Animal Control Bylaw and the Business License Bylaw to ensure that these bylaws remain up to date with territorial legislations along with the needs of the Watson Lake Community. We encourage residents and business owners to review these bylaws and to submit written comments to cdo@watsonlake.ca or drop them at the Town Office. Please scan the QR Code to quickly access the draft bylaws.

If you haven't renewed your business license or applied for a pet license, now is also the perfect time! Please visit the Town Office to complete your renewal/application to stay compliant. Let's keep Watson Lake a great place to live and do business!



Scan to access:
Watson Lake Draft Bylaws
Under Review
<https://shorturl.at/kluPJ>



Experiences Canada Youth Exchange Program exchange beyond borders

The Experiences Canada Youth Exchange Program connects youth from different regions to strengthen cultural understanding and develop lifelong friendships along the way. This school year, 15 Watson Lake youth and 14 Simcoe County youth participated in the exchange, experiencing each other's communities firsthand.

Exploring Ontario

Last September, 15 Watson Lake Secondary School students travelled to Ontario, where they explored Niagara Falls, the CN Tower, and Sainte-Marie among the Hurons while staying with host families in Simcoe County. They also attended a Blue Jays game, experienced treetop trekking, and more importantly, had the opportunity to build connections, gain a deeper appreciation for Canada's history and diversity, and see life from another youth's perspective.

Cold Climate, Warm Hearts

This April, it's time for Watson Lake to welcome the Ontario youth group and to give us a chance to showcase the North and share what makes our home special. *Whether through a friendly greeting, sharing local stories, contributing financially or in any way you can, let's do our best to make them feel like home so they can experience our way of life and make their visit to the Yukon's Gateway unforgettable.* For ways to help out, please email cgallicano@gmail.com

housing accelerator grant

Phase II applications for the HAF Program is extended until March 31st! If you want to convert your underutilized, and vacant properties into dwelling units, scan QR code to learn more!
The Town also accepts applications for Phase I, but Phase II applications take precedence if the program reaches full subscription.

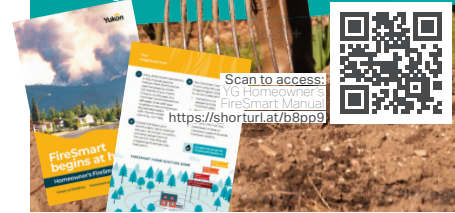
Scan to access:
Residential Conversion
Grant Program
<https://shorturl.at/aS12V>



Act Smart Firesmart.

The Town of Watson Lake has identified two priority areas for FireSmarting activities, and work is soon to begin to prevent any possible fire spread.

Does your area need firesmarting? Identify if you are at risk as the wildfire season approaches by following the FireSmart guidelines through the QR code below!



Scan to access:
YG Homeowner's
FireSmart Manual
<https://shorturl.at/b8pp9>



Sharing Skills, Inspiring Others.

The Watson Lake Family Centre is looking for passionate individuals to lead workshops or educational sessions in their area of expertise! Whether it's arts, crafts, technology, fitness, health, or something unique, this is your chance to teach, connect, and make an impact.

Got a skill to share? Competitive compensation is offered! Email wlcnpn.capc@gmail.com with a brief description of your expertise or workshop idea to learn more. Let's create something amazing together!



just around the corner

With the tourist season fast approaching, businesses in Watson Lake have a great opportunity to attract more customers through the Urban Visitor's Sign (UVS) Program. This program allows businesses to have their signs installed along the Alaska Highway Corridor, near Watson Lake, making them visible to travellers entering and leaving the territory.

For a fee, businesses can apply for a space on these signs, which are then reviewed and approved by the Town based on policy guidelines. Once approved, the signs will be installed, and basic maintenance will be handled by the Town to ensure they remain clear and in good condition. Responsibilities for maintenance are outlined in

detail in the UVS policy, which can be accessed by visiting the Town Office or by scanning the UVS Policy QR code.

With an increase in highway traffic during the summer months, now is the time to take advantage of this opportunity. Secure your spot to make your business stand out. Contact the town office for more information or to apply.

Scan to access:
Town of Watson Lake
Urban Visitor Sign Policy



rec-create Programs and upgrades coming to the Recreation Centre

Want to unlock your inner peace and rejuvenate your mind and body? Join the Watson Lake Parks and Recreation for uplifting yoga sessions at the Wye Lake Cabin led by instructor Pauline Sears. Classess are open for all skill levels, to help you relax, stretch and strengthen. Regular drop-in fees apply. Please bring a mat and strap if you have one.

Schedule: Sunday May 16, Monday March 31, and more to come!
7:00pm, Wye Lake Cabin

We want to hear from you! Recreation Centre gym survey

Help improve the Watson Lake Parks and Recreation weight room! Share your feedback on the facility and equipment to guide future upgrades. Scan the QR code to participate thank you for your input!



Scan to access:
Recreation Centre Weight Room Survey
<https://shorturl.at/kluPJ>

Kiki Karnival 2025: Watson Lake's Winter Bash of fun and festivities

The Watson Lake Recreation Centre team extends a heartfelt thank you to everyone who made the Kiki Karnival Celebration a huge success this past February 14–16. From those who set up shop for the garage sale, the amazing banana bread entries, the Grad's incredible pancake breakfast, to Mayor and Council for warming everyone up with through the bonfire, hotdogs, and hot chocolate and of course, you, the community, for bringing the energy and excitement that made this event unforgettable!

This year's Kiki Karnival filled the Rec Centre with laughter, excitement, and special moments shared among families and friends. The games, activities, and fun despite the cold are truly a testament to the spirit that we Watson Lakers share. Seeing the community come together to celebrate and create new memories are what make events like these so meaningful. We are incredibly grateful for your participation, energy, and ongoing support.

We can truly say that Watson Lake is more than just a town, it is a community that comes together, time and time again, to make things happen.

From all of us at the Rec Centre, thank you for making the 2025 Kiki Karnival one to remember! We look forward to seeing you at the next one!



What's cool, Schools?

Watson Lake Secondary School

At WLSS, *students thrive in a welcoming, supportive environment rooted in respect, kindness, and cooperation.* Emphasizing academic, social, emotional, and cultural growth, the school fosters confidence and purpose through high standards and strong community support.

Johnson Elementary School

JES prioritizes literacy and student success through a Balanced Literacy Approach and engaging learning strategies. *With a focus on attendance, social responsibility, and collaboration, the school builds confident, capable learners.* Scan the QR code to learn more!

Scan to access:
First Nation School Board
FNSSB Schools
<https://shorturl.at/mpNx4>



Events in town mark your calendars:

Sunday	Family Hockey <i>free, register at the recreation centre</i>
Monday	Badminton
Tuesday	Town Council Meeting <i>6:00pm, Council Chambers, every 1st and 3rd tuesday of the month</i> Pickleball
Wednesday	Ninja Tumbling /
Thursday	Senior's Walking Drop-in
Friday	Drop-in Curling Pickleball Watson Lake Food Bank Hampers <i>every 3rd friday of the month</i> Watson Lake Signpost Seniors

all events/programs are subject to change, please check community pages to confirm or if there are short-notice venue change/cancellations or visit watsonlake.ca/p/upcoming-events

sweeping success!

Watson Lake's 43rd Bonspiel rocks Wye Lake once again.

The 43rd annual Watson Lake Outdoor Bonspiel brought the community together for another thrilling weekend of curling and socialization at Wye Lake Park. With 19 teams competing, the event continued its legacy as one of the longest-running open-air bonspiels in North America.

Dedicated volunteers spent weeks flooding and clearing the ice to create two curling sheets, ensuring a smooth playing surface despite fluctuating weather conditions. Teams enjoyed at least four games each, with some matches stretching past midnight.

Costumes, camaraderie, and lighthearted competition defined the event, making it a highlight of

the winter season. While trophies and prizes were awarded, the real victory was in the community spirit and enduring tradition of outdoor curling.

As another bonspiel wraps up, Watson Lake looks forward to keeping this winter tradition alive for years to come.

