



Photo Credits:
Watson Lake Parks & Rec, Watson Lake Outdoor Bonspiel,
Snowboard Yukon, BlueMountain

Game On, Watson!

Winter at the Rec Centre and beyond has been busy in the best way. Curling season brought two highlights: the 44th Annual Outdoor Bonspiel at Wye Lake and the Curling League running January through March, a great way to learn and socialize over a game of “chess on ice”.



Hockey Weekends

Hockey also kept the boards warm. January featured an Under-11 (U11) tournament at the Rec Centre, with youth teams traveling in from across the territory to compete. February followed with Kiki Karnival 2026, welcoming visiting teams to Watson Lake for a high-energy weekend of hockey, family-fun games and events rounding up some winter community spirit.

Down the Slopes

Up on the hill, Mt. Maichen has been loaded with snow and running weekends, with extra weekday hours during Spring Break. Snowboard Yukon also came to town for a snowboarding clinic that helped local riders level up.

Next up: the Slush Cup on April 11, bring your best costumes, cheers and an extra pair of socks!



The Small Town Definition of Volunteerism

This January, the Commissioner's Office of the Yukon named Jenny Skelton the recipient of the Commissioner's Award for Public Volunteer Service. Jenny's contribution in Watson Lake is measured in decades of steady, behind-the-scenes work that keeps community life and volunteerism running.

Jenny is closely tied to the Ski Hill and the Watson Lake Ski Club, where she supports operations, helps with fundraising and grants, and strengthens safety through Ski Patrol and First Aid certification efforts. She has supported the School Ski Program for years, introducing generations of local kids to skiing and outdoor recreation. Beyond the hill, Jenny volunteers at the Thrift Store, boards, events, and recreation and education initiatives. This award recognizes her decades of showing up, pitching in, and keeping Watson Lake moving. Watson Lake is lucky to have you, congratulations, Jenny!



TOWN OF WATSON LAKE **WATCHDESK**

Mayor and Council have been busy and packed a lot into the December to February stretch. Here are some of the high-level highlights, with the focus on what's moving forward for the community.

Community Safety and Emergency Readiness

1. Wildfire preparation is advancing. Last December 2025, Yukon Wildland Fire provided an update on fuel management, prescribed burns, and the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). Once the CWPP is formally adopted, it opens the door to additional federal and territorial funding for future fuel management projects.

2. Watson Lake's Emergency Management Plan was adopted on January 20, 2026. This plan will guide municipal emergency planning and support the development of a redacted stakeholder version and a resident-friendly tri-fold pamphlet that will be mailed to the public. Work is also continuing on business continuity and community re-entry procedures.

3. Liard First Nation shared key components of its nearly complete Community Safety Plan, with early initiatives already identified (including youth and Elder supports and cultural programming). The Town has been invited to stay involved as the plan moves forward.

Housing and Community Growth

1. Council reviewed and adopted a Mortgage Accessibility Report (Housing Accelerator Fund initiative) outlining barriers to mortgage and secured lending in Watson Lake, along with action plans and advocacy steps.

2. Housing Accelerator Fund progress is strong: by early February, four of five initiatives were completed, with the final one in progress. Updates shared included 24 new dwelling units in progress and additional development permits in the pipeline.

3. To help close the remaining housing gap, Council supported moving forward with additional intakes for housing and residential conversion grants, and requested more information on other tools that could help encourage development (such as incentives and zoning updates).

Budgets, Reserves and Long-term Planning

1. Council gave third and final readings to the 2026 Capital Budget, O&M Budget, and the 2026 Property Tax Levy Bylaw.

2. New reserve bylaws were adopted to support future road repair/maintenance needs and future fire/emergency capital expenses. This sets the Town up for planned, proactive investments instead of last-minute scrambles.

3. Council supported strengthening financial resilience by approving \$1,000,000 in transfers from savings into four reserve funds (Operational Contingency, Environmental Services, Fire & Emergency Management, and Road Maintenance & Repair).

Other Miscellaneous Topics

1. Council discussed critical operations at the Water Treatment Plant, including generator issues and options being explored to strengthen backup power and service reliability during outages.

2. Public Works received praise from Council and residents for snow clearing during heavy snowfall and extreme cold, including extra efforts to keep roads safe and passable.

3. Council moved forward on bylaw housekeeping, including reviews of the Traffic Control Bylaw, ongoing work on the Vacant and Unoccupied Buildings Bylaw, and direction to review the Councillor Code of Conduct Bylaw for clarity and alignment.

4. Mayor and Council met with MP Hanley to discuss federal funding priorities and key projects for Watson Lake like housing.

For more details, including viewing the following meetings' agenda, minutes and schedules, the Town of Watson Lake encourages you to visit www.watsonlake.ca where you will find these resources including audio recordings of past council meetings.

view the council
meetings page:
www.watsonlake.ca/council-meetings



NEWLY ADOPTED RESERVE BYLAWS

The Fire & Emergency Management and Road Maintenance & Repair Bylaw



read more:
www.watsonlake.ca/bylaws

These bylaws create dedicated 'savings accounts' for two big-ticket needs: roads and protective services. Instead of scrambling when a critical in-ground infrastructure fails, a road needs major repair, or fire/emergency equipment reaches end-of-life, Council will have money set aside in advance, to only be used for that purpose. These reserves protect essential services, support predictable planning, and improves long-term stability without relying on last-minute funding.

This helps Mayor and Council, The Town of Watson Lake, and the community to be proactive, rather than reactive when issues concerning these essential infrastructures arise.

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There are benefits in getting a water meter.

Getting a water meter can pay off. Metered water rates are lower than non-metered service, and that gap will grow following Council's recent approval of water rate increases. A meter also helps the Town monitor water consumption and watch for abnormalities, this helps us spot potential leak areas sooner.

The Town of Watson Lake provides water meters at no cost to eligible non-metered residents, you're responsible for installing it in the proper location, either yourself or by hiring a local contractor who can do it for you.



The Operations Department

The Operations Department keeps Watson Lake moving, and the work doesn't stop when the weather changes. From road upkeep and snow clearing to keeping Town equipment ready for daily operations, the public works team works year-round to keep our transportation network safe and reliable. Operations also includes two key service areas; Utilities and Solid Waste. Utilities operates the water and sewer systems that deliver clean drinking water and manage wastewater services. Solid Waste runs weekly garbage collection and manages the landfill and recycling depot to keep our community clean and environmentally responsible.

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Interested in running your own business?

The Town of Watson Lake is inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI 2026-01) to operate the Watson Lake Recreation Centre concession, a great opportunity to be part of a busy community hub and provide healthy food and drinks for patrons. Submissions close April 30, 2026 at 3:00 PM with inquiries and site visits available until April 23. Full details, submission requirements, and contact info are posted at the Town website!



view the business directory:
www.watsonlake.ca/bids-and-tenders



Busy and ready, what we are up to recently

This winter, the Town of Watson Lake departments have all been busy maintaining operations continuity, doing and preparing for projects.

At the Rec Centre, you'll notice new gym equipment and the near-full implementation of our new online system extending from events scheduling to integrating gym memberships, with the long-term goal of extended-hours access through a key fob system coming later this year.

On the emergency preparedness side, Council's approval of the Town's Emergency Management Plan means we can now finalize public and stakeholder-friendly versions, giving residents practical "what to do" guidance for emergencies. Protective Services is also focused on readiness, ensuring that volunteer firefighters meet NFPA standards and qualifications so they're trained for the work when it counts.

Looking ahead, Mayor, Council, and Administration are gearing up for spring and summer: pushing funding applications, lining up projects, planning recreation programming, advancing the live fire facility planning process, and tackling essential maintenance and upgrades. More to come in detail, next issue.

Do you have an old fridge you need to dispose of?

Watson Lake households, did you know that there is a simple way to save energy (and get a little cash back). If you've got an old extra fridge humming away in the porch, shed, or back room, Yukon's Refrigerator Retirement Program will pay you \$50 to retire it, and they'll pick it up from your home and recycle it at no extra cost.

To qualify, the fridge must be 10 years or older, in working condition, and not a compact unit (it must be 7.75 cubic feet / 220 litres or larger). Freezers aren't eligible.

Upgrading instead?

Watson Lake is a diesel-grid community, which means you can qualify for a \$300 Good Energy rebate per ENERGY STAR® appliance when you buy an eligible washer, dishwasher, ventless dryer, refrigerator, or freezer. Keep your receipt and proof of it's ENERGY STAR-certified, then apply and choose cheque or direct deposit (rebates are issued within about 12 weeks). To book a fridge pickup you can email: energy@yukon.ca or 867-393-7063.

Shake off the Winter!

Seasonal hiring season is here! The Town of Watson Lake and some local businesses have started posting spring and summer term positions, so keep a lookout and apply! We are looking forward to seeing you around.



Business Owners: Have you renewed your Town Business License?



A friendly reminder to Watson Lake business owners that if you haven't renewed (or applied for) your 2026 Business License, now's a good time to get it on the list. The Business Licence Bylaw requires a valid licence to operate in Town, and renewing keeps your business in good standing.

An active licence also helps us keep you in the loop! We use the active business licence directory to contact local businesses when the Town is outsourcing services or inviting bids on projects. Plus, active licence holders are featured on the Town website. If you want to update how your business appears in our Business Directory, email officeadmin@watsonlake.ca



view the business directory:
www.watsonlake.ca/business-directory



view the job board:
www.watsonlake.ca/employmentopportunities



Rachel Anderson receives the University of Regina's Inspiring Leadership Academic Entrance Fellowship Award

Watson Lake has another reason to smile this winter. Rachel Anderson, a first-year University of Regina Education student has been named the recipient of the Inspiring Leadership Academic Entrance Fellowship, a four-year award worth \$30,000 that recognizes academic excellence, leadership, and service. It's a big achievement, and a well-earned moment that reflects the time she's invested in school and in her community.

In 2024, Rachel was recognized with the Government of Yukon's Outstanding Youth Achievement Award for the steady ways she shows up: helping with community recreation events, lending a hand at local schools and the hospital, and welcoming visitors through the Visitor Centre. She received a certificate and medallion, and her recognition was shared across the Yukon, but around here, people know her for

something simpler: reliability.

Rachel was awarded the leadership fellowship on March 5, 2026. Congratulations, Rachel, Watson Lake is proud of you and cheering you on. Let's learn from Rachel's example: show up, pitch in, and keep at it! *See you around Town!*

Upcoming and Other Events

Spring Clean-up Initiative

Free Pickup-Truck Load of Waste Dropoff
Details Coming Soon!



Spring Recreation Programming

Watson Lake Parks and Recreation
Easter Egg Hunt & More!
April 4, 2026, 12pm



Household Hazardous Waste Day
Drop off Banned Waste
Coming this Spring

Opening of the Northern Lights Centre
This May



Northern Lights Centre Movie Weekends

Winter-Early Spring 2026

Shows and Dates To Be Announced

Emergency Preparedness Week
"Be Prepared. Know Your Risks"
Information on Emergency Preparedness, and your roles to yourself and to your family.

Opening of Dennis Ball Memorial Pool

This May

Mt. Maichen Ski Hill Annual Slush Cup
April 11, 2026

THE COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Ongoing Events and Programs



Recreation Centre Activity Nights

BEADING(Thu) GAMING(Fri)
Thursdays & Fridays, 6:00-8:00pm



Health Center Flu and COVID Shots

BOOK THROUGH
(867) 536-5255



Watson Lake Food Bank-Hampers

LAST FRIDAY OF MONTH
Rec Centre- 11:00am-2:00pm

Recurring Events

Subject to change, announcements at Watson Lake Sunshine

Badminton and Table Tennis MONDAYS
WLSS Gym- 7:00pm-9:00pm

Ninja Tumbling WEDNESDAYS
WLSS Gym- 5:30pm-8:00pm

Pickleball FRIDAYS
WLSS Gym- 7:00pm-9:00pm