

Nature park for disabled

A lodge and camping area designed especially for use by the handicapped was opened last October in Alberta's Kananaskis Provincial Park, southwest of Calgary in the Rocky Mountains.

The \$1.7-million resort is the first public park in North America with both indoor and outdoor facilities designed for use by the disabled.

Located on high land overlooking Lower Kananaskis Lake, with a view of the Spray Mountains dominated by Mount Indefatigable, the complex accommodates 40 overnight visitors in cedar cabins and others in a 15-unit campground for tents.

William Watson Lodge

The William Watson Lodge complex includes two-bedroom and three-bedroom cabins and a main building with dining and sitting areas, fireplace, kitchen, library, laundry facilities, sundeck and first aid room. The cabins also have kitchens and sundecks with barbecues.

Special facilities throughout the complex include railings and grab bars, raised toilets, lowered sinks and light switches, tilted mirrors, front controls on stoves, free space under sinks, 30-inch wide doorways, ramps or flat entrances and hard-packed trails free of barriers to those in wheelchairs.

The trail system around the lodge, linking picnic areas, a fire circle and scenic lookouts, will be covered with asphalt this year.



Alberta Premier Peter Lougheed accompanied by Mrs. Lougheed (centre) and Mrs. Marguerite Watson (left), officially open the centre.

The nearby Mount Lorette Ponds have been deepened and stocked with trout. Wheelchair access is provided to the ponds by flat asphalt roads and paths. Plans are in the works to make fisheries at Sibbald Creek, Ford Creek and Grotto Mountain Pond accessible to the disabled.

The lodge was named for an author and lecturer whose research laid the groundwork for vocational training schools for the disabled across Canada.

Born in Clydebank, Scotland, in 1904, Mr. Watson was paralyzed in both arms from birth and later lost the use of both legs. His family moved to Canada in 1911



Mr. and Mrs. Lougheed and Mrs. Watson (left) stand on verandah of the main hall of the William Watson Lodge. The verandah offers a view of the Spray Mountains in the Canadian Rockies.



Alberta Labour Minister Les Young and two disabled visitors inspect the recreation and accommodation facilities of William Watson Lodge.

Alberta government photos

and settled in Fort MacLeod, Alberta where he learned to swim and ski and to write with both his toes and his mouth.

After graduating from high school with honours, he earned a law degree from the University of Alberta in 1928 but was denied the opportunity to articulate because of his disability.

Mr. Watson devoted the rest of his life to improving social and environmental conditions for the disabled. He died in 1965.