

ISSUE: Recruitment and Retention of Family Physicians

DATE: April 22, 2020

REQUEST: That the Regional District of East Kootenay provide \$25,000 in 2020/2021 to support recruitment and retention of family physicians by the East Kootenay Division of Family Practice. This funding will be used in conjunction with the remaining \$16,188 balance of previous funding from RDEK.

Background:

The East Kootenay Division of Family Practice is a non-profit society that is funded for our core functions through the General Practice Services Committee, which is comprised of the Ministry of Health and the Doctors of BC. The purpose of the Division is to represent and support family physicians across the East Kootenay to continuously drive better, more effective and integrated primary care. We work closely with Interior Health and the Ministry of Health on many initiatives, but recruitment of family physicians typically falls outside of their scope. Historically, family physicians have recruited for their own clinics, but with the creation of the EK Division in 2011, we began to support and coordinate those efforts. Having enough family physicians in our communities is an important element to having a sustainable and effective primary health care system, and ensuring people can receive timely, quality health services close to home.

The East Kootenay Division of Family Practice hired a Recruitment and Retention Coordinator five years ago to support family physician recruitment and retention efforts across the EK. This work was co-funded provincially through a Doctor's of BC and Ministry of Health initiative which ended in 2016, and was then funded through the RDEK through CBT community initiatives. There was also significant community in-kind support through community red carpet committees. The Division has continued to support the coordinator position through our infrastructure funding, and with the continued support from RDEK funding.

The Value

Since 2016, six new family physicians were recruited in Cranbrook, but the community needs an additional five physicians. The recruitment coordinator has also been assisting Invermere to recruit several new physicians and has also supported Fernie and Sparwood in their recruitment efforts.

In addition to full time physicians, the coordinator has helped to coordinate and attract locum physicians to the area to cover the regular doctors while they are away on vacation or doing continuing education. This prevents back-ups and longer wait times and creates a more desirable working environment for family doctors.

A physician shortage in one community often spills over into neighbouring communities or the regional hub in Cranbrook. For communities where we do not directly support recruitment activities, such as Sparwood and Elkford's Interior Health facilities, we do support those

physicians in terms of retention activities. Furthermore, we recognize that they are also affected by physician shortages in Fernie and Cranbrook.

The recruitment coordinator represents the East Kootenay region on the Interior Physician Recruitment and Retention (IPRR) Steering Committee. The IPRR Steering Committee is focused on enhancing locum support and licensing, and facilitating the placement of international medical graduates across the Interior. This is key strategic role in ensuring the EK has access to and influence over processes that influence future recruitment.

We have also developed strong community support with partners. The Division partners with community organizations, (i.e. Chamber of Commerce, local governments, businesses, etc.) to "roll out the red carpet" for visiting potential recruits. A meeting held March 23, 2020 reconvened and recognized partners who were previously involved in supporting physician recruitment in Cranbrook. Several community organizations will work with the Division to develop a marketing campaign to attract family physicians to Cranbrook, where recruitment seems most challenging. With the additional funds from RDEK, we will contract a marketing lead to seek other funds to develop a video and other materials, as well as work with partner organizations, such as the Cranbrook Chamber, Cranbrook Tourism and EK Foundation for Health. Some of these marketing resources may also be adapted and used in other communities.

In addition to past activities, we also propose to attend the Family Medicine Forum (in Winnipeg next year) to recruit family physicians to the East Kootenay through the Health Match BC booth. We will also continue to leverage the new Regional Recruitment Knowledge Broker, recently hired through Doctors of BC to enhance recruitment processes and remove barriers for physicians wishing to move to the area from out of province.

The Need

With the remaining RDEK/CBT Community Initiatives funding ending in the next few months, there remains an identified need for this work to continue and for financial support to ensure we have enough family doctors in our communities across the EK. In addition to the typical recruitment activities, we would also like to do a targeted marketing campaign focused on Alberta family physicians who may be seeking to move across the border.

East Kootenay community residents benefit from having good access to family doctors. Access to primary healthcare is fundamental to attraction and retention of residents, businesses and investors. We offer recruitment support to all communities in the East Kootenay Division of Family Practice. In communities that require minimal recruitment support (e.g. Sparwood and Elkford as Interior Health sites), we also offer retention supports to encourage practicing family physicians to remain in the East Kootenay.

There are currently ten postings on Health Match BC for East Kootenay communities seeking family physicians. We hope to continue supporting the family practices to find new recruits to fill these gaps.

Request

Please consider continuing to support this work with a shared contribution to the Division of Family Practice. By contributing to the financial cost of this shared priority, we can ensure our communities have continuous, appropriate and timely access to family physicians and medical care. The additional funding that we are seeking to support recruitment and retention across the East Kootenay communities is \$25,000 in 2020/2021.

If you require any further information, please contact:

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