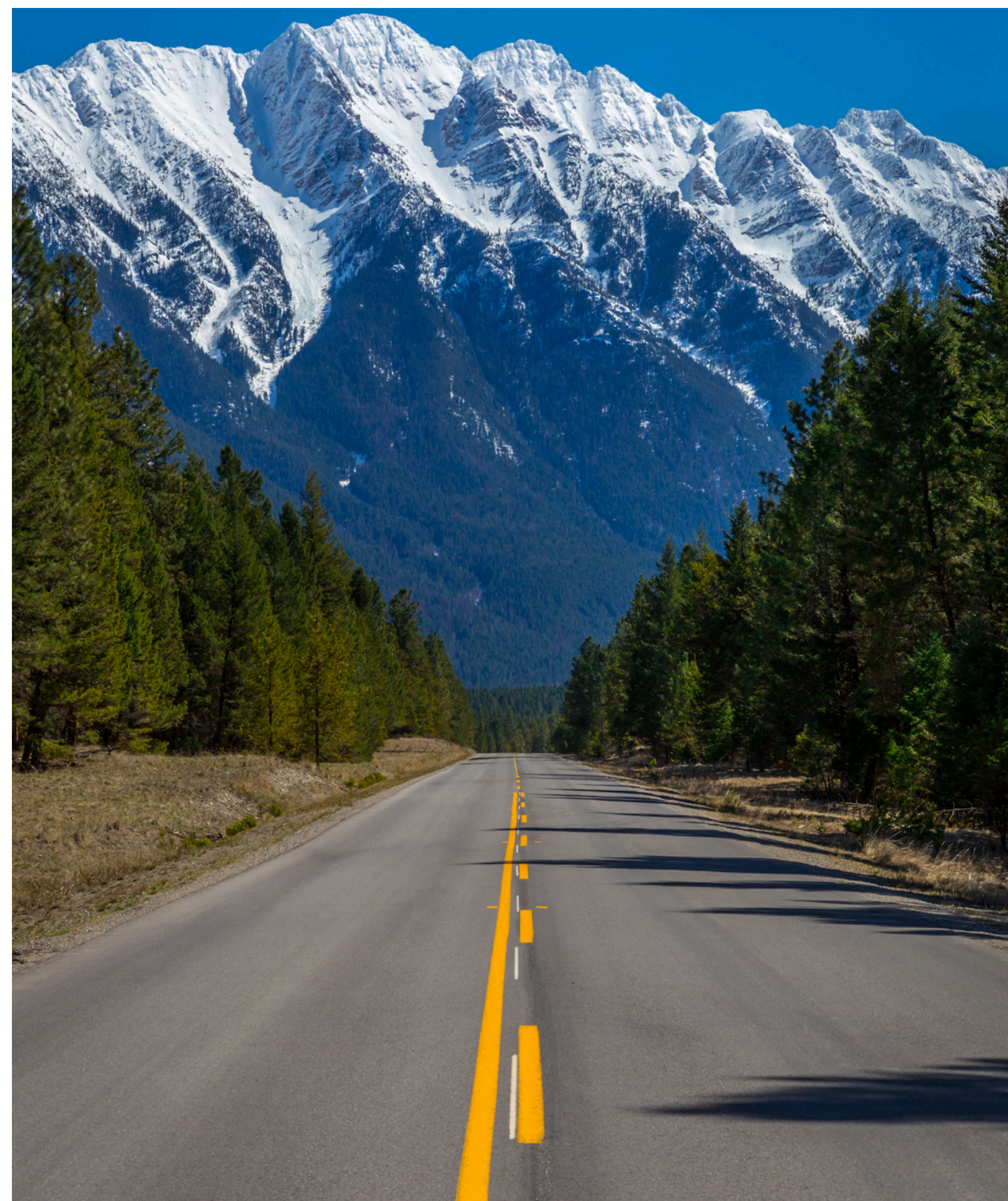


East Kootenay Rural Locum Program



Dr. Tristan Brownrigg camping in the Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains, B.C. Supported by the East Kootenay Rural Locum Program, Dr. Brownrigg first locumed in both Fernie and Golden before deciding to make the East Kootenay his permanent home. Read his locum story:



Key Program Features

- Travel and accommodation subsidies for eligible locum physicians
- Centralized advertising and connection point through the EK Division
- Coordination support to ease clinic onboarding and logistics
- Purpose-built to complement—not compete with—provincial locum programs
- Designed for rural and semi-rural communities without local locum pools

The Impact:

- 17 locums supported to date across East Kootenay communities, improving access to care
- Expanded equitable locum access in communities that fall outside provincial support programs
- Sustainable rural physician coverage that reduces burnout and provides local doctors with time off
- Locally tailored recruitment and retention pathways that showcase communities to visiting physicians
- Strengthened continuity of care for patients through timely, coordinated locum coverage across the region

Bridging Gaps. Supporting Physicians. Strengthening Rural Care.

The East Kootenay Rural Locum Program is a regionally coordinated initiative that helps recruit and retain locum physicians by subsidizing travel and accommodation costs for those working in East Kootenay communities.

Informed by local physician champions and coordinated by the East Kootenay Division of Family Practice, the program also acts as a central connector between clinics and locums—promoting vacancies, coordinating logistics, and building relationships that often spark longer-term recruitment interest. The funding was initially made possible through a one-time exemption from FPSC, which allowed the EK Division to use surplus infrastructure funds from the conclusion of the Physician Master Agreement in 2022 through March 2024. Since then, the EK Division Board has committed funds to continue this support.

To date, the program has supported 17 locum physicians across the region, helping maintain patient access to care and giving local doctors critical respite to prevent burnout.

Why it Started:

Persistent physician shortages and limited access to provincial locum supports have created ongoing challenges to maintaining continuity of care in the East Kootenay. Most local communities fall just outside the eligibility criteria for the provincial **Locums for Rural BC** program, leaving them without the financial incentives needed to attract visiting physicians. At the same time, the region faces high turnover, rising patient demand, and significant travel costs and logistical hurdles for physicians coming from elsewhere.

Unlike communities located near urban hubs—where locums can potentially work closer to home—the East Kootenay requires a greater commitment of time and resources. Many East Kootenay communities are also Resort Municipalities with peak tourist seasons, which further drives up accommodation costs and limits availability.

In response, local physician leaders designed a homegrown, **non-competitive model** to reduce these barriers, close coverage gaps, strengthen recruitment pathways, and better support the needs of physicians who care for our communities.



Collaboration & Leadership

Created by local family physicians and led by East Kootenay Division of Family Practice, in collaboration with clinics, regional and provincial partners, and community recruiters.

Together, we are transforming a regional challenge into a local solution—one locum at a time.

Next Steps

Looking ahead, the program is focused on:

- Expanding outreach and engagement with new locum physicians
- Strengthening local clinic connections and onboarding supports
- **Exploring sustainable long-term funding to ensure ongoing coverage**