



## Frigon honoured with rural physician action plan bursary

News

MURRAY GREEN  
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The Alberta Rural Physician Action Plan (RPAP) recognized 12 medical students for their dedication to their careers in rural medicine for 2012-13.

"We are pleased to have such a high calibre of candidates for our annual awards and bursaries program again this year," said RPAP executive director David Kay. "The award and bursaries program aims to encourage students who come from a designated rural area to pursue a career in rural medicine by reducing their financial burden."

The RPAP Rural Medical School Award provides \$5,000 for each year of medical studies to assist with the student's tuition, accommodation, living and/or travel expenses. The award is available to students in any year of their medical degree and, once accepted, the student receives the award every year until medical school graduation, contingent upon their meeting the program requirements.

The RPAP's Dr. John N. Hnatuik Rural Medical Student Bursary provides full tuition, including differential fees for each year of medical studies, in order to reduce the financial burden faced by rural medical students. These two initiatives aim to encourage students who come from a designated rural area to pursue a career in rural medicine by reducing their financial burden, said David. "We are pleased and proud to continue to support medical students in their journey to provide physician services to rural Alberta communities."

Former University of Alberta, Augustana Campus student **Stephanie Frigon\*** was one of the recipients of the bursary.

"I completed my under-grad at Augustana (Bachelor of Science with a major in biology and minor in chemistry) and now I'm in my second year of medicine at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. This bursary will be for my second, third and fourth years. It covers all of my tuition course fees and some of my differentials," explained Stephanie, who has indicated she is willing to go to a rural community after she graduates.

"I grew up in Jasper and one of the reasons I went to Augustana is because I wanted to be in a smaller centre and be part of the community. I wasn't ready to come to Edmonton. Camrose is at or near the top of my list because I love the city. The other thing is that my partner grew up in a farming community northeast of Edmonton called Thorhild. There is a chance I might be out there as well. It will be a tough decision. I will be working in residency for two years after I graduate and then I would like to spend a year in women's health to specialize in that as a family doctor."

The bursary is a return in service award. "I could have applied for it in my first year, but I wasn't really sure if I wanted to commit to the service. If I received the bursary for four years, then I would commit to three years in a rural setting. By only receiving the bursary for three years, my commitment is only two years," said Stephanie. "You can choose where you go as a family doctor. The only limit is that you can't be in Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Grande Prairie or the big cities. If you specialize, then the limitation is just not Edmonton or Calgary. I had to take a year to decide what was best for me."

Stephanie decided in Grade 12 that she wanted to be a doctor. "I went to Augustana in a welcome weekend to see the campus and learn about what it had to offer. Augustana was appealing to me right away," Stephanie said. "I went with a friend and we both loved it. The visit made our decision to go to Augustana."

Stephanie has been watching some hospitals struggle with losing services. "In Jasper, I see the hospital slowly being put in a position where they can't always offer services. They haven't been delivering babies for a long time," stated Stephanie. "I want to be a doctor, but living in a smaller community is important. My partner Derek, who I met at Augustana, is from a community that doesn't have a doctor. They have a doctor come in one day a week. To see a female doctor, they have to go to Fort Saskatchewan. That's another reason I want to go rural."

Stephanie also wants access to hospitals that offer full services. "I volunteered at St. Mary's Hospital during my third and fourth year at Augustana. I was able to see how they brought in specialists to Camrose and try to emulate a larger hospital. That really appeals to me. I know that if I move to Camrose, that I really love the community already. My experience at Augustana has prepared me for the future and helped make me who I am today. The smaller class sizes allowed you to be in a closer knit group. I have some classes with someone who also went to Augustana, so you have that connection."

Stephanie has to learn her limits. "I've been told since I expressed an interest in family medicine, that if you go to a rural community you have to learn to say no very quickly. Rural doctors tend to burn out because there is so much demand. They end up taking on more than they can handle," she said. "I'm sure that is something I will struggle with. I want to be in a rural community because I want to have a family and I want my children to experience the same upbringing that I had."

*\*Stéphanie (00400) is the daughter of Pierre Frigon (00105) and Ginette Marcoux, granddaughter of Marcel Frigon (00036), member aff28. Stéphanie is of the lineage of Louis-Augustin (Ls-Au), branch of Hubert.*

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