

Quest for Gold



ONTARIO CARD Athlete Handbook 2009/2010

Ministry of Health Promotion

Ontario Card Athlete Handbook 2009-2010

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This Handbook is designed for Ontario athletes who have been nominated by their Provincial / Multi Sport Organization (PSO/MSO) to receive *Quest for Gold* 'Ontario Card' funding from the Ministry of Health Promotion.

Please review the contents of this Handbook prior to completing your on-line application. For assistance or further information please contact your PSO/MSO.

How do athletes apply for their Ontario Card?

Once an athlete is notified of their nomination by their PSO/MSO, they shall apply on-line at www.questforgold.ca.

Only those athletes nominated by their PSO/MSO should apply online. Alternates will only apply if informed by their PSO/MSO that they have been upgraded to carding status.

Deadlines: Cycle 1 athletes - October 26, 2009
Cycle 2 athletes - January 28, 2010

Athletes will need to know the following before applying online:

- Carding Cycle: 1 or 2 – confirm with your PSO/MSO;
- Email: Previously funded applicants will login using the same email address used previously. **Do not create a new account;**
- Password: returning applicants will use their same password. Use the “Forgot Password” button to retrieve a previous password;
- Full address information;
- Social Insurance Number;
- Name/contact information for personal Coach.

Each applicant must have a unique email address. The online system will not allow multiple users to use the same email address. Ensure this is a functional email account you have regular access to.

Information must be entered using proper capitalization (not ALL CAPS or all lowercase). No short forms or abbreviations shall be used.

After completing the online process applicants will immediately receive an auto-response email from the address application@questforgold.ca. If you cannot locate this email, please check your Junk or Spam folder and add this address to your “Safe List”. If the message still cannot be located, please contact staff at the Ministry of Health Promotion for assistance.

If you are unable to apply online and require a paper copy of the application please contact the Ministry of Health Promotion at Scott.Cooper@Ontario.ca or by phone: 416-314-7692.

Program Overview: *Quest for Gold* - Ontario Athlete Assistance Program

1. What are the goals and objectives of the *Quest for Gold* - Ontario Athlete Assistance Program?

The Ontario Athlete Assistance Program (OAAP) is one aspect of the funding offered under the 2009-2010 *Quest for Gold* Program. In addition to the OAAP the *Quest for Gold* Program also provides funding to enhance access to high performance coaching and to provide enhanced competitive opportunities and services for Ontario athletes. Funding for the *Quest for Gold* Program is obtained from revenues generated in 2009-2010 by the *Quest for Gold* lottery game that is administered by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG).

The overarching goal of the *Quest for Gold* - OAAP is directly related to the Enhanced Excellence goals of both *ACTIVE2010* and the *Canadian Sport Policy* – i.e. to improve the performance and number of Ontario athletes performing at the national and international level; thereby contributing to the improved performance of Canada at international competitions. Specific objectives of the program are:

- a) To help athletes continue their pursuit of athletic excellence at the highest levels of national and international competition;
- b) To encourage athletes to stay in Ontario to live and train;
- c) To compensate athletes for earnings lost while training;
- d) To enable athletes to successfully pursue excellence in sport while fulfilling their educational goals;
- e) To increase athlete access to improved high performance coaching; and
- f) To enhance training and competitive opportunities available to athletes.

2. How will the *Quest for Gold* - OAAP achieve its objectives?

The *Quest for Gold* - OAAP achieves its objectives by:

- Providing additional direct financial assistance (Canada Card designation) to Ontario athletes who are carded at the national level by Sport Canada;
- Providing standards for the identification and support of eligible sports and eligible junior-aged Ontario athletes to be carded at the Provincial level (Ontario Card);
- Ensuring that Provincial Sport and Multi-Sport Organizations (PSO/MSOs) have appropriate selection procedures and criteria in place, for the nomination of Ontario athletes to be carded at the Provincial level (Ontario Card);
- Providing OAAP carding support in a consistent and timely manner to athletes who meet their sport-specific carding criteria in those sports that meet OAAP eligibility requirements;

- Focusing support on junior-aged athletes to assist in their transition from junior to senior national and international competition;
- Providing a living and training allowance to help offset some of the costs athletes incur as a result of their involvement in high-performance sport;
- Allowing financial assistance provided to be used to offset tuition costs to allow athletes to attain academic goals;
- Ensuring, in conjunction with the PSO/MSO, that appropriate training and competitive opportunities are in place and providing annual, ongoing and long-term evaluation of athlete performance and potential.

3. How will direct financial assistance be provided to Ontario athletes?

Direct financial assistance will be provided to eligible Ontario athletes in the form of a living and training allowance. Assistance will be provided through two carding designations – Canada Card and Ontario Card.

Canada Card - Eligibility is limited to Ontario athletes who are carded by Sport Canada. Canada Card will provide up to an additional 33% in funding over and above the full value of the carding designation the athlete is receiving from Sport Canada – the actual value of the card is dependant on funding available.

Ontario Card - **Ontario Card will provide direct financial assistance to Ontario junior-aged athletes identified by PSO/MSOs. The Ministry will also consider Ontario Card designation for some senior-aged ParaSport/Paralympic athletes and able bodied athletes in certain circumstances. The actual value of the card is dependant on funding available and total quantity of eligible athletes.**

Note: “Junior-aged athlete” is defined as those athletes who fall within the eligible age range for the Canada Games - 11 to 22 years of age. (Consideration will be given to older junior-aged athletes if a PSO/MSO’s NSO-approved Long Term Athlete Development model (LTAD) identifies older athletes in the “Train to Train” and “Train to Compete” categories).

For example, these junior-aged athletes would ordinarily compete in one of the following developmental categories:

- a) National Junior Team/ National Junior Development Team or Training pool;
- b) Canada Games level;
- c) Provincial age group/ Elite club/ Ontario Games level.

An Athlete with a Disability (AWAD) is defined as an athlete nominated by a PSO/MSO that is recognized by the Ministry of Health Promotion as being responsible for governance of a particular Paralympic sport.

4. What are the eligible expenses for this funding?

Carded athletes receiving funding under the Ontario Athlete Assistance Program can spend funding obtained only on the following items:

- Normal living costs;
- Costs directly associated with training (e.g. coaching, facility fees, other athlete services);
- Costs associated with attending training camps and competitions (e.g. entry fees, travel costs);
- Sport-specific equipment;
- Tuition and education related expenses (e.g. books, fees, commuting costs).

5. Does the Ministry of Health Promotion require receipts from the carded athletes?

The terms and conditions of the *Quest for Gold* program (contained within the athlete application) require athlete recipients to retain all records and documents related to the grant (e.g. receipts) for a three-year period and must make them available for inspection by the Ministry of Health Promotion when requested. However, the Ministry will not be requesting receipts from carded athletes on an ongoing basis. The PSO/MSO can request receipts on an ongoing basis if this requirement is stipulated in the Sports Organization – Athlete Agreement.

6. Are *Quest for Gold* - Ontario Athlete Assistance Program grants considered “income” under the Federal *Income Tax Act*?

Canada Revenue Agency has advised that, upon review of the program, the benefits received from the *Quest for Gold* – OAAP Program will generally be received by recipients tax free within the meaning of the *Federal Income Tax Act*. If OAAP-funded athletes have any questions regarding their personal tax situation, they should contact the CRA at 1-800-267-6999 or online at www.cra-arc.gc.ca. Athletes who receive an OAAP grant in 2009-2010 will not be issued a T4A form for grants received in the 2009 calendar year.

7. Payments for the 2009-2010 *Quest for Gold* - OAAP

For 2009-2010 eligible athletes will receive carding status for one carding year starting from April 1, 2009 – March 31, 2010. All payments will be processed before March 31, 2010. The amount of total payment to eligible athletes will be determined at a later date, once the total quantity of eligible athletes is known.

8. What programs are funded by *Quest for Gold*?

The *Quest for Gold* Program had a budget of \$10.0 million in 2008-2009. In addition to the Ontario Athlete Assistance Program, funding was provided to enhance access to high performance coaching and to provide enhanced competitive opportunities and services for Ontario athletes.

Minimum Sport and Athlete Eligibility Requirements

1. What are the minimum eligibility requirements and responsibilities for PSO/MSOs?

- Sport must have a Provincial Sport Organization / Multi-Sport Organization (PSO/MSO) that is formally recognized by the Ministry of Health Promotion as per the Ministry's *Sport Recognition Policy*.
- Sport and sport discipline must have been, or must be a participant in the regular program of at least one of:
 - i. 2010 Olympic / Paralympic Winter Games, 2012 Olympic / Paralympic Summer Games;
 - ii. 2009 Canada Summer Games or 2011 Canada Winter Games;
 - iii. 2008 Ontario Games (youth) – eligible sports in this category may fluctuate depending on eligibility in a particular Games event.
- The PSO/MSO must conduct a formal process for nominating athletes for Ontario Cards. Rules and procedures must be published and made known to all concerned, along with procedures for appealing decisions.
- The PSO/MSO must have in place a Sports Organization - Athlete Agreement signed by each individual athlete who is being nominated for an Ontario Card. The Sports Organization - Athlete Agreement must contain in writing the rights, responsibilities and obligations of the athlete and the PSO/MSO.

2. What are the minimum Ontario Card eligibility requirements for athletes?

General Athlete Eligibility Criteria

- Athlete must be a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant;
- Athlete must be a resident of Ontario for one year prior to his/her nomination for carding status;
- Athletes must be living in and continuing to train in Ontario. Exceptions will be made **on a case-specific basis** providing that the athlete can substantiate in writing at the time of application/nomination for carding status that they meet one of the following “**Residency Exceptions**”:
 - He/She cannot receive the required level of training in Ontario and is out of the province **temporarily** during the year (i.e. due to lack of facilities, coaching, competitions);
 - He/She must attend a post-secondary institution out-of-province because the course of study is not available to him/her in Ontario;
 - It is more financially feasible to attend a post-secondary institution out-of-province, or other extenuating circumstances require the athlete to be out of the province.
 - The onus is on the athlete to demonstrate that he/she needs to be out of province. **As detailed in the Selection Criteria document prepared and**

circulated by each sport, athletes seeking a “Residency Exception” will submit written documentation to their PSO/MSO’s Selection Committee clearly indicating how they meet these residency exceptions. The Ministry may require that the athlete provide additional supporting documentation from the athlete’s PSO/MSO, National Sport Organization (NSO) or other sources to verify reasons for athlete’s absence from the Province of Ontario.

- Athlete must be a member in good standing with PSO/MSO and NSO where applicable;
- Athlete must have entered into a Sports Organization - Athlete Agreement with his or her PSO/MSO and must be in full compliance with the terms and conditions of that agreement;
- Athlete must demonstrate a commitment and dedication to a proper training and competitive program;
- Athlete must be instructed by a coach who has been trained and certified in the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) Level 2 or equivalent;
- Athlete must not be under sanction as per the Canadian Anti-Doping Policy;
- Athlete must be attending an educational institution full-time (i.e. primary and secondary schools)
 - Exceptions will be made providing that the athlete can substantiate that his/her training will not allow for full-time attendance or if an athlete requires special needs that preclude full or part-time attendance (e.g. Athlete with a disability (AWAD) athlete);
- Athletes who have completed their area of study at the secondary level (i.e. high school) and who continue to train towards participation in major national or international competitions will also be given consideration;
- If eligible, the athlete must compete, and continue to compete for Ontario and/or Canada for one year from the date of the Minister’s letter informing the athlete of acceptance into OAAP program, at Canada Games and other national competitions involving provincial team competitions;
- Athletes who have achieved Canada Card status are not eligible for Ontario Cards;
- Eligibility will be limited to Ontario junior-aged athletes, ages 11-22 (“junior-aged” refers to chronological age, not a sport’s specific age category - only exception is for PSO/MSOs using 30% of Ontario Card allotment for Senior level athletes not funded by Sport Canada – see below) who have been identified as a next generation national team athlete as demonstrated by:
 - Identification within the NSO pool of identified next generation national team athletes for the last two competitive seasons; OR
 - Results at regional championships, national championships (junior and/or senior) or other recognized national/international competitions over the last two competitive seasons; OR
 - Representation on a Canadian National Team (developmental and/or junior). Athletes training for Canada Games or provincial teams may also be considered.

Residency Exemption for Military Families:

The one-year Ontario residency requirement is waived for any Ontario Card or Canada Card applicant who is a spouse or dependant of a Regular Force member of the Canadian Forces or a Reservist currently deployed by the Canadian Forces into active service. This means that eligible military family members now qualify for OAAP funding immediately upon becoming residents of Ontario. Please see page 12 of this Handbook for details of this exemption, including a list of documents needed to verify eligibility for this waiver of the one-year Ontario residency requirement.

Age of athletes:

The primary purpose of the Ontario Card designation is to provide direct financial assistance to “junior-aged” high performance athletes. Age criterion is different for able bodied athletes and AWAD athletes.

Able Bodied Athletes:

A minimum of 70% of a PSO/MSO’s Ontario Card allotment must be distributed to junior-aged athletes (11 to 22 years of age) in able bodied sports (consideration will be given to older junior-aged athletes if a PSO/MSO’s NSO-approved LTAD model identifies older athletes in the “Train to Train” and “Train to Compete” categories).

The onus will be on the PSO/MSO to demonstrate that the athlete in question is still competing and training at the “junior” level.

The Ministry recognizes that athletes who have graduated from the junior level but have not yet received funding support from Sport Canada are also in need of funding support. Therefore, the Ministry will allow PSO/MSOs to provide a maximum of 30% of its Ontario carding allotment to able bodied athletes no longer eligible for “junior athlete” status. This is contingent on the following:

- The athlete must be identified by the sport’s NSO as a national team athlete or potential next generation national team athlete.

The onus is on the PSO/MSO to provide supporting documentation from the NSO to demonstrate that the athlete has been identified as per above. Documentation to be provided could include a letter from NSO documenting/identifying athlete as being on national development team or in national development pool.

- To be deemed a potential next generation national team athlete, in the year following receipt of Ontario Card funding the athlete must not surpass the maximum age limit for national team qualification.
Example: If an NSO has a rule which states national team athletes must not exceed 30 years of age, an athlete that turns 30 during the fiscal year April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011 would not be eligible for an Ontario Card in fiscal year April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010.

Note: The Ministry reserves the right to request additional documentation/information at its discretion.

Athletes with a Disability (AWAD):

The Ministry recognizes that junior/developmental level ParaSport/Paralympic athletes are generally older than those in able bodied sports. This recognition is supported by detailed study of AWAD development models as reflected in *No Accidental Champions*, the Long Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD Model) for Athletes with a Disability. Therefore, the age guidelines for Ontario Cards for AWAD are different from able bodied athletes. In 2009-2010 the following guidelines will apply for the nomination of eligible AWAD for Ontario Cards:

- Paralympic sports in Canada Games - Must use Canada Games technical package guidelines (maximum age of 24 years old).
- Non-Canada Games Paralympic sports - no specific age limit but the PSO/MSO must demonstrate that the athlete being nominated has been identified as having real potential to get to the national team level (i.e. the athlete must be identified by NSO or through the PSO High Performance identification process).

3. What if athletes are under the age of 18?

All athletes under the age of 18 must have their parent or legal guardian sign their OAAP application form. Cheques will be processed in the name of the eligible athlete.

4. What about professional / semi-professional athletes or athletes who have normal living and training costs covered?

Athletes who receive or who have received funding in excess of normal living and training costs through exercising their skills as a professional or semi-professional athlete, or have these costs covered by virtue of involvement on a team through a formal agreement, within the same sport as the one for which they wish to receive OAAP funding, will not be eligible for OAAP support. The onus is on the athlete to prove that he/she meets the eligibility requirements.

5. Can an athlete be nominated for Ontario Card status in two sports? (i.e. receive two cards)?

No. If an athlete is nominated in two separate sports the athlete will have to decide which sport he/she wishes to receive carding support from.

6. If a sport has a number of disciplines that meet the general sport eligibility criteria does the Ministry of Health Promotion designate cards towards each discipline within that sport?

No, the Ministry of Health Promotion will not be designating cards towards each discipline within a sport. For those PSO/MSOs that have a number of disciplines that meet the general sport eligibility criteria, it is up to the individual PSO/MSO to develop the Sport Specific Athlete Selection Criteria and nominate their athletes within their various disciplines and distribute their allotment of cards accordingly.

7. Is an athlete previously funded by Sport Canada eligible for an Ontario Card?

An athlete that received Sport Canada Carding between April 1, 2008 and March 31, 2009 and/or April 1, 2009 and March 31, 2010 and is no longer in receipt of Sport Canada Athlete Assistance shall not be eligible to receive *Quest for Gold* funding during fiscal year 2009-2010 (April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2010).

The intent of this rule is to prevent athletes whose performance levels and rankings no longer qualify them for Sport Canada carding from taking an Ontario Card from a future national-level athlete. However, exceptions may apply and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Exceptions may include, but may not be limited to logistical or administrative changes, injuries, etc. and shall be presented to MHP by the PSO/MSO Selection Committee as part of their nomination process.

8. What about athletes attending foreign post-secondary educational institutions?

Athletes who are attending any foreign post-secondary educational institution (including NCAA institutions) and are receiving an athletic scholarship in any sport are *not* eligible to receive OAAP support.

9. How does receipt of *Quest for Gold* - OAAP funding impact on an athlete's current or future eligibility for a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) scholarship or their eligibility to compete in a non-scholarship NCAA sport?

The onus is entirely on the athlete to determine the impact of accepting OAAP funding on current or future NCAA eligibility and to decide whether or not to accept OAAP funding. The athlete will be required to acknowledge this onus and responsibility when signing the OAAP Ontario Card application form/completing the online application and agreeing to the related terms and conditions of the program. The Ministry accepts no responsibility for any consequences that may follow, or losses that may be sustained in connection with an athlete's eligibility or ineligibility for a NCAA scholarship, or in connection with an athlete's eligibility or ineligibility to compete in a non-scholarship NCAA sport.

The Ministry strongly urges the PSO/MSO and individual athletes to contact the NCAA Eligibility Center to determine the impact of *Quest for Gold* - OAAP funding on current or future eligibility for a NCAA scholarship or on eligibility to compete in a non-scholarship NCAA sport.

National Collegiate Athletic Association

www.ncaa.org

NCAA Eligibility Center mailing address:

NCAA Eligibility Center

P.O. Box 7136

Indianapolis, IN 46207

Customer service line – 317-223-0700

Fax number - 317-968-5100

It is the Ministry's general understanding that the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) stipulates that any athlete who accepts direct funding from a provincial or state government run program will likely forfeit their eligibility for an NCAA scholarship and their eligibility to participate in that sport or to participate in a non-scholarship NCAA sport. This understanding is based on the information currently available to the Ministry, which could change.

As far as the Ministry can determine there are 20 sports that currently qualify for OAAP that are also full NCAA scholarship sports. These sports are:

Athletics (M/W - including cross country M/W)	Rifle (M/W)
Baseball (M)	Rowing (W)
Basketball (M/W)	Skiing (M/W)
Diving (M/W)	Soccer (M/W)
Fencing (M/W)	Softball (W)
Field Hockey (W)	Swimming (M/W)
Golf (M/W)	Tennis (M/W)
Gymnastics (M/W)	Volleyball (M/W)
Ice Hockey (M/W)	Water Polo (M/W)
Lacrosse (M/W)	Wrestling (M)

The NCAA has also recognized designated "emerging sports" intended to provide additional athletics opportunities to female student-athletes. While athletic scholarship opportunities in these sports are limited in comparison to full NCAA sports, if competing at the varsity level these sports must also abide by all NCAA regulations, which include student-athlete eligibility. According to information currently available to the Ministry, the following are women's emerging sports:

- Archery
- Badminton
- Equestrian
- Rugby
- Squash
- Synchronized Swimming
- Team Handball

Please note: These lists are not definitive and could change.

Information provided is for the general assistance of prospective *Quest for Gold* applicants and is based on the information currently available to the Ministry. The NCAA eligibility rules are entirely outside the Ministry's control and could change.

The Ministry makes no representations or warranties regarding the possible impact of a *Quest for Gold* - OAAP funding on an athlete's eligibility or ineligibility for a NCAA scholarship, or on an athlete's eligibility or ineligibility to compete in a non-scholarship NCAA sport.

10. How does the acceptance of *Quest for Gold* – OAAP funding impact on an athlete’s eligibility for disability pensions, other social assistance programs or academic scholarships?

The Ministry cannot offer any definitive opinion on how acceptance of OAAP funding will impact on current or future eligibility for any other income programs or scholarships (see Note below). The onus is on the athlete to check the terms and conditions of such programs or scholarships to determine potential impacts. The Ministry makes no representations or warranties regarding the possible impact of *Quest for Gold* - OAAP funding on such programs, pensions or scholarships and accepts no responsibility for any consequences that may follow, or losses that may be sustained in relation to such programs, pensions or scholarships.

Please note: The Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services has determined that all direct financial assistance provided to athletes under the OAAP is not to be included as income and assets for purposes of social assistance effective retroactively to January 11, 2006 when OAAP was first launched. Athletes who may be affected are encouraged to contact the nearest regional office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

11. How many Ontario Cards will be allotted to each eligible sport?

The number of Ontario Cards allotted to each sport will be based primarily on the following (in priority order):

- 1) The number of athletes (male and female) that a PSO/MSO is eligible to send to the Canada Games as per the most current Canada Games technical package.
- 2) If not represented as a Canada Games sport, MHP has assigned an allotment of cards based on the relative activity levels of the PSO/MSO as compared to other MHP recognized PSO/MSOs that are receiving a carding allotment.

12. Can a PSO/MSO serving athletes with a disability provide an Ontario Card to an athlete’s guide?

Consistent with Sport Canada’s Athlete Assistance Program, guides are recognized for the sports of Cross Country Skiing, Alpine, Cycling and Athletics that serve disciplines with athletes with disabilities. These guides are eligible to be nominated for an Ontario Card, however the card must come from within the PSO/MSO’s current carding allocation. No additional cards will be provided for this purpose.

Military Family Residency Exemption

The minimum one-year Ontario residency requirement for *Quest for Gold* eligibility is waived with respect to a spouse or dependant of a member of the Canadian Forces.

- A “member of the Canadian Forces” means:
 - A regular force member; or
 - A member of the reserve force of the Canadian Forces referred to in subsection 15(3) of the *National Defence Act* (Canada) who falls within the circumstances described in clause 50.2(1) (a) or (b) of the *Employment Standards Act, 2000*.
- This means that eligible military family members now meet *Quest for Gold* - OAAP residency requirements immediately upon becoming residents in Ontario. The athlete must also meet all other program requirements, including the PSO/MSO’s athlete ranking process, as detailed in the PSO/MSO’s Selection Criteria.
- In order to qualify for this exemption, the following documents must be presented to the PSO/MSO Selection Committee, who will forward said documents to MHP for confirmation of eligibility:
 - A. If the Canadian Forces member is present, any one of the following is acceptable:
 - Canadian Forces member’s **Military Identification Card** (e.g. NDI 20);
 - **Special Passport** (for military family members returning from an out-of-country posting);
 - Canadian Forces **Member’s Personnel Record Resumé**;
 - Canadian Forces member’s **Posting Message** (with accompanying photo identification); or
 - **Letter** from local Ontario Military Family Resource Center on letterhead confirming military family status of applicants (issued at the discretion of the local Military Family Resource Centre).
 - B. If the Canadian Forces member is **NOT** present at the time of application, any one of the following documents is acceptable:
 - **Special Passport** (for military family members returning from an out-of-country posting);
 - Canadian Forces **Member’s Personnel Record Resumé**; or
 - **Letter** from the local Military Family Resource Center on letterhead confirming military family status of applicants (issued at the discretion of the local Military Family Resource Centre).

The Ministry of Health Promotion reserves the right to request additional documentation to establish eligibility for this exemption. For more information, please contact the Ministry of Health Promotion directly at 416-314-7692.

Athlete Selection Requirements and Application Process

1. How are athletes considered for Ontario Card eligibility?

Athletes will be nominated for Ontario Cards by their PSO/MSO using an objective sport specific selection criteria developed by a "Selection Committee" appointed by the PSO/MSO. The sport specific selection criteria will be approved by the PSO/MSO's Board of Directors in advance of the selection process. The selection criteria must be objective, transparent and free of conflict of interest.

2. How will the selection criteria process work for Ontario Cards?

The PSO/MSO will publish the selection criteria so that it is known to athletes and members (i.e. on website, in newsletter or through communications to athletes and members (mailing, e-mail). The Selection Committee applies the Selection Criteria and nominates athletes for Ontario cards. A pre-set quantity of cards is allocated to each PSO/MSO by the Ministry of Health Promotion.

The PSO/MSO will also publish or make known to members the nominated list of athletes for Ontario carding status.

3. How do athletes apply for their Ontario Cards?

Once an athlete is notified of their nomination by their PSO/MSO, they shall apply on-line at **www.questforgold.ca**. Only those athletes nominated by their PSO/MSO should apply online.

Ontario Card program deadlines are detailed on page 15 of this handbook.

NOTE: In the event of a conflict or inconsistency, the selection criteria established by the Ministry and set out in these Guidelines and duplicated in the Athlete Handbook provided to each nominated athlete shall prevail over the selection criteria established by the PSO/MSO.

Appeals

Appeals will be allowed in writing from athletes who have not been nominated by a PSO/MSO for Ontario Card status. Appeals will be dealt with by an Appeals Committee comprised of representatives from the sport community and chosen by the Ministry.

Grounds for appeals will be limited strictly to issues related to:

- A) Whether or not the PSO/MSO has completed the selection process in accordance with their own published selection criteria and related procedures;
- B) Whether or not the selection criteria developed and applied by the PSO/MSO were fair, objective, transparent and free from discrimination or conflict of interest.

After hearing an appeal the Appeals Committee will have the authority to:

1. Direct the PSO/MSO to redo the selection process using the correct criteria/process and submit a new list of nominated athletes;
2. Deny the appeal; or
3. Allow the appeal and nominate the appellant for carding status.

The deadline for athletes to submit appeals to the Appeals Committee is:

Cycle 1 - October 26, 2009

Cycle 2 - February 1, 2010.

The appeals will only be accepted on the MHP-provided template, in writing through regular post, registered mail, courier or delivered in person. Appeals that are delivered personally or by courier shall be deemed to be received on the date of delivery. Appeals that are delivered by regular post or registered mail shall be deemed to be received three days after the date of mailing. Appeals submitted by e-mail or fax will not be accepted. The Appeals Committee will discuss all appeals at once, after PSO/MSOs publish their list of nominated athletes. Appeals received in advance of the PSO/MSO announcing nominees will not be reviewed until after the Appeals deadline.

Appeals must be completed on the template, available as part of each PSO/MSO's Selection Criteria document, and will be directed to:

Quest for Gold Ontario Athlete Assistance Program Appeals Committee
c/o Sport and Recreation Branch
Ministry of Health Promotion,
393 University Avenue, Suite 1802
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2S1

The Sports Organization - Athlete Agreement

What is the purpose of the Sports Organization - Athlete Agreement and what does it specify?

The purpose of the Sports Organization - Athlete Agreement is to stipulate in writing the responsibilities and obligations of both the PSO/MSO and the athlete during the time that the athlete has Ontario carding status. The Agreement will specify:

- Eligible expenses;
- The PSO/MSO's obligations under the Agreement;
- The athlete's obligations, including a commitment to follow an agreed-upon training and competitive program;
- Athlete reporting requirements (i.e. training logs);
- Any other commitments to the PSO/MSO that the carded athlete is required to make (for instance, time, promotional activities, etc.);
- The Agreement's duration;
- Specific MHP and PSO/MSO policies that will be applicable to the Ontario carded athlete.

Payment of the grant awarded through the Ontario Card is contingent on having a signed Sports Organization - Athlete Agreement. Payments will not be released until the PSO/MSO informs MHP that the athlete has returned their signed Agreement to the PSO/MSO.

The Sports Organization Athlete Agreement shall be in effect from the date of the Minister of Health Promotion's Approval Letter for a period of one year, unless terminated earlier.

An athlete who previously received *Quest for Gold* funding and entered into a Sports Organization – Athlete Agreement must have complied with the terms of that agreement to the satisfaction of the PSO/MSO in order to be considered for funding in fiscal 2009-2010.

Illness, Injury or Pregnancy

1. Short-term curtailment of training and competition for health-related reasons

Health-related circumstances that limit training and competition for relatively short periods (i.e. less than four months) are a matter strictly between the PSO/MSO and the athlete and should not affect an athlete's Ontario Card status.

2. Long-term curtailment of training and competition for health-related reasons

Carded athletes who are unable to maintain full training and competition commitments for periods longer than four months because of injury, illness or pregnancy will continue to receive 100% of the OAAP financial support to which they would otherwise be entitled, provided the following conditions are met:

- The athlete undertakes in writing to train or rehabilitate or both under the supervision of the PSO/MSO:
 - 1) for the period of time for which the athlete is unable to fulfil the training and competition commitments that are part of the normal Sports Organization - Athlete Agreement; and
 - 2) at a level that minimizes risk to the athlete's personal health and ensures optimal return to full training and competition at the earliest possible date.
- The athlete signifies in writing his or her intention to return to full high-performance training and competition at the earliest date possible following the illness, injury or pregnancy.
- In the case of injured or ill athletes, a positive prognosis for the athlete's return to training and competition in the sport within 8 to 12 months is required from a PSO/MSO team physician or equivalent.

3. Failure to meet selection criteria for health-related reasons

At the end of an Ontario carding cycle during which an athlete has, for strictly health-related reasons, not achieved the standards required for nomination of carded status, he or she **may** be considered for nomination for the upcoming carding period under the following conditions, provided the PSO/MSO has a policy included within their selection criteria to prioritize and card injured, ill or pregnant athletes that is clear, consistent and not arbitrary (this policy must be transparent and accessible). Note: The PSO/MSO must be able to

demonstrate the probability that the athlete being nominated would have been ranked high enough, if active.

Conditions:

- The athlete has fulfilled all reasonable training and rehabilitation requirements aimed at a speedy return to full high-performance training and competition during the period of his or her injury, illness or pregnancy and, despite making every reasonable effort to attain the applicable carding standards during the year in which the injury, illness or pregnancy occurred, has failed to do so, in the view of the PSO/MSO, for reasons strictly related to the injury, illness or pregnancy.
- The PSO/MSO, based on its technical judgement and that of a PSO/MSO team physician or equivalent, indicates in writing the expectation that the athlete will achieve at least the minimum standards required for carding during the upcoming carding period.
- The athlete has demonstrated and continues to demonstrate his or her long-term commitment to high-performance training and competition goals, as well as his or her intention to pursue full high-performance training and competition throughout the carding period for which he or she wishes to be renewed despite not having met the carding criteria.

4. Voluntary withdrawal from carded-athlete training and competition for health-related reasons

An athlete may want, for reasons related to injury, illness or pregnancy, to voluntarily withdraw temporarily or permanently from normal carded-athlete training and competition requirements. In these circumstances the PSO/MSO must notify the Sport and Recreation Branch, Ministry of Health Promotion, so that the athlete can be removed from the Ontario Carded list. The Ministry reserves the right to request the repayment of the whole or any part of the Grant.

2009-2010 Ontario Card Program Deadlines

Cycle 1

Sept 14, 2009	PSO/MSO posts athlete selection criteria
Oct 21, 2009	PSO/MSO publish list of carded athletes
Oct 26, 2009	Deadline for athletes to apply online at www.questforgold.ca
Oct 26, 2009	Ontario Card appeal deadline
Nov 4, 2009	Appeal Committee reviews appeals

Cycle 2

Oct 30, 2009	PSO/MSO posts athlete selection criteria
Jan 18, 2010	PSO/MSO publish list of carded athletes
Jan 28, 2010	Deadline for athletes to apply online at www.questforgold.ca
Feb 1, 2010	Ontario Card appeal deadline
Feb 9, 2010	Appeal Committee reviews appeals

Returning Funds – Withdrawal from Program

If an athlete chooses not to accept the *Quest for Gold* - OAAP Funding, either to maintain future NCAA eligibility, due to retirement from sport, or whatever the reason, it is important to contact MHP at your earliest convenience to allow MHP to transfer these funds to the next eligible athlete within your sport's ranking list.

The *Quest for Gold* cheque, accompanied by a brief explanation indicating the name and address of the athlete and reason for withdrawal should be sent to:

Quest for Gold - Ontario Athlete Assistance Program
 c/o Sport and Recreation Branch
 Ministry of Health Promotion,
 393 University Avenue, Suite 1802
 Toronto, Ontario M7A 2S1