

Ontario Card Athlete Handbook 2011-2012

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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 and Sport.

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 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 carded status.

Deadlines: Cycle 1 athletes - October 24, 2011
Cycle 2 athletes - January 20, 2012

Athletes will need to know the following before applying online:

- Email address: 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 (if you don't have one, enter 000000000);
- Name/contact information for personal Coach.

Each applicant must have a unique email address. The online database 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 and Sport for assistance.

If you are unable to apply online and require a paper copy of the application please contact the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport 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 2011-2012 *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 2011-2012 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 the *Canadian Sport Policy* – 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 and the number of athletes awarded a Canada Card.

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 the number of athletes awarded an Ontario Card.**

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).

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 and Sport 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 and Sport 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 make them available for inspection by the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport when requested. The Ministry will be performing random audit requests for receipts from carded athletes during this fiscal year. The PSO/MSO can also 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*?

Athletes who receive an OAAP grant will not be issued a T4A form. The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has advised that the benefits received from the *Quest for Gold* – OAAP Program are generally to 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.

7. Payments for the 2011-2012 *Quest for Gold* - OAAP

For 2011-2012 eligible athletes will receive carding status for one carding year starting from April 1, 2011 – March 31, 2012. All payments will be processed before March 31, 2012. 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 has a budget of \$10.0 million in fiscal year 2011-2012. In addition to funding athletes under the Ontario Athlete Assistance Program, program funding is provided to a number of organizations to enhance access to high performance coaching and to provide enhanced competitive opportunities and services for Ontario athletes, including the Sport Alliance of Ontario, the Coaches Association of Ontario, the Canadian Sport Centre Ontario, the University of Toronto and MacMaster University.

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 and Sport as per the MHPS *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. 2012 Olympic / Paralympic Summer Games, 2014 Olympic / Paralympic Winter Games;
 - ii. 2011 Canada Winter Games or 2013 Canada Summer Games;
 - iii. Those sports eligible to participate in the 2012 Ontario (Youth) Games who also meet the following criteria:
 - the sport's NSO is financially supported by Sport Canada as a result of the implementation of the Sport Funding and Accountability Framework (SFAF);
 - the sport has a sanctioned World Championship, World Cup or equivalent championship that is held at least every other year;
 - The sport's NSO has a clearly articulated national team program with appropriate training and competitive opportunities for which provincial level athletes are training to qualify for; and
 - The PSO/MSO must also complete the *PSO/MSO Provincial High Performance Program Questionnaire* (see sample, TAB 12) to the satisfaction of MHPS to confirm that the PSO/MSO has an ongoing, high-performance training program in place.
- 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 permanent 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 shall be made **on a case specific basis by the PSO/MSO Selection Committee** provided that the athlete can substantiate in writing at the time of application/nomination for carding status that:
 - (a) 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, and competitions);

- (b) He/She must attend a post-secondary institution out-of-province either because the course of study is not offered by an Ontario institution; **or**
- (c) It is more financially feasible to attend a post-secondary institution out-of-province.

The onus is on the athlete to demonstrate that he/she needs to be out-of-province for one of the above reasons. **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 by the posted deadline, clearly indicating how they meet these residency exceptions.**

Documentation related to exception (a) above may include, but shall not be limited to, a letter from the athlete’s NSO outlining the following, as well as any other pertinent information:

- why the athlete is training out of province;
 - whether or not the athlete was formally invited by the NSO;
 - what additional opportunities are being made available beyond those provided in Ontario; and
 - any other information that will illustrate that the athlete is receiving enhanced training while still meeting all obligations of the PSO/MSO.
- Athletes who have achieved Canada Card status are not eligible for an Ontario Card in the same fiscal year;
 - 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 have met all terms and conditions of any previous *Quest for Gold* Sports Organization – Athlete Agreements to the satisfaction of the PSO/MSO in order to be eligible for consideration in 2011-2012;
 - Athlete must demonstrate a commitment and dedication to a proper training and competitive program;
 - Athlete’s coach must be minimum Level 2 NCCP certified or trained status Competition Stream or the sport’s equivalent in the Instruction Stream;
 - Athlete must not be under a sanction that prohibits competition as per the Canadian Anti-Doping Policy;
 - Athlete must be attending an educational institution full-time (i.e. elementary and secondary schools):
 - Exceptions will be made provided 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));
 - Athletes who have completed their area of study at the secondary level (i.e. high school) or post-secondary level and who continue to train towards participation in major national or international competitions will also be considered;
 - If eligible, the athlete must compete, and continue to compete solely 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 level competitions;
 - Athlete must not receive financial support from any other provincial/territorial athlete assistance program. This does not include academic scholarships, bursaries, student grants, student loans, social assistance, disability pensions, and other forms of financial assistance that are unrelated to competitive sport.

- 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 athletes older than 22 years of age who have been identified as a potential next generation national team athlete by the PSO/MSO’s selection process.

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 11 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. A PSO/MSO may choose to allocate a maximum of 30% of it’s carding allotment to athletes older than 22 years of age who have been identified as a potential next generation national team athlete by the PSO/MSO’s selection process.

- 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, 2012 to March 31, 2013 would not be eligible for an Ontario Card in fiscal year April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012.

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 LTADM for Athletes with a Disability. Therefore, the age guidelines for Ontario Cards for AWAD are different from able bodied athletes. In 2011-2012 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 funding that covers the full amount of their living expenses and training costs 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 and Sport designate cards towards each discipline within that sport?

No, the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport 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 who is no longer funded by Sport Canada now eligible to receive a *Quest for Gold* 'Ontario Card'?

An athlete who received Sport Canada Carding during any part of MHPS' fiscal year April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011 and/or any part of fiscal year April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012 and is no longer in receipt of Sport Canada Athlete Assistance shall not be eligible to receive *Quest for Gold* funding during fiscal year 2011-2012 (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012.)

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 by the Ministry on a

case-by-case basis. Exceptions may include, but may not be limited to logistical or administrative changes (eg. reduction in Sport Canada carding allocation), injuries, etc. On behalf of an athlete, the PSO/MSO is required to contact MHPS in writing prior to the submission of the Athlete Nomination Form to seek individual exceptions.

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?

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 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 available to the Ministry at the time of print and is subject to change at the sole discretion of the NCAA.

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 and agreeing to the related terms and conditions of the program. The MHPS 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 MHPS 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 hours - 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern time Monday through Friday.

Toll-free phone number (U.S. callers) - Customer service line – 877-262-1492

Phone number (international callers) - Customer service line – 317-223-0700

Fax number - 317-968-5100

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, MHPS has assigned an allotment of cards based on the relative activity levels of the PSO/MSO as compared to other MHPS 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.

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

The *Quest for Gold* Program had a budget of \$10.0 million in fiscal year 2010-2011. In addition to funding athletes under the Ontario Athlete Assistance Program, program funding was provided to a number of organizations to enhance access to high performance coaching and to provide enhanced competitive opportunities and services for Ontario athletes, including the Sport Alliance of Ontario, the Coaches Association of Ontario, the Canadian Sport Centre Ontario, the University of Toronto and McMaster University.

Military Family Residency Exemption

- The minimum one-year Ontario residency requirement for *Quest for Gold* eligibility is waived with respect to an athlete who is a spouse or dependant of a member of the Canadian Forces and who takes up residence in Ontario during the fiscal year.
- 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 MHPS 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)
 - **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**
 - **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 MHPS reserves the right to request additional documentation to establish eligibility for this exemption. For more information, please contact the MHPS 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 clear, objective, and transparent, and must be applied in a manner that is free from bias, discrimination and 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 and Sport.

The PSO/MSO will also publish or make known to members the nominated list of athletes for Ontario carding status. See the ‘Deadlines’ on page 18 of this Handbook.

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 18 of this Handbook.

NOTE: In the event of a conflict or inconsistency, the selection criteria established by the MHPS 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

Athletes who have not been nominated for an Ontario Card by their PSO/MSO Selection Committee or who have been nominated for a 'Half Card' versus a 'Full Card', where applicable will be allowed to appeal that decision by filing a *"Notice of Appeal"* with MHPS. Appeals will be heard by an Appeals Committee comprised of representatives from the sport community, selected by the MHPS.

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

- A) Whether or not the Selection Committee has completed the selection process in accordance with its own published selection criteria and related procedures;
- B) Whether or not the Selection Committee applied the selection criteria in a manner that was free from bias, discrimination and/or conflict of interest.

Please note that before an athlete can file a *Notice of Appeal*, he or she must first ask their PSO/MSO for reasons explaining why he or she was not nominated for an Ontario Card.

If the athlete is not satisfied with the PSO/MSO's response, the athlete may submit a *Notice of Appeal*, found on the PSO/MSO website or from MHPS. A *Notice of Appeal* will only be accepted on the MHPS-provided template (typed or hand-printed, no hand-written entries) through email, regular post, registered mail, courier or delivered in person. The *Notice of Appeal* must be received by MHPS by 4 p.m. on the deadline day. Appeals that are delivered personally or by courier shall be deemed to be received on the date of delivery.

Once MHPS has received the *Notice of Appeal*, it will share it with the PSO/MSO, who will then have an opportunity to file a *"Response"* with MHPS by a specified deadline. The *Response* will outline why the PSO/MSO believes that the Selection Committee's decision not to nominate the athlete should be upheld by the Appeals Committee. MHPS will share the PSO/MSO *Response* with the athlete.

If, after receiving the PSO/MSO *Response*, the athlete believes that the PSO/MSO has raised new or additional reasons to justify the Selection Committee's decision not to nominate the athlete for an Ontario Card, then the athlete will have an opportunity to file a *"Reply"* with MHPS, responding to these additional reasons. The *Reply* must be limited to these additional reasons and cannot be used to make submissions already raised in the *Notice of Appeal*, or that the athlete neglected to include in the *Notice of Appeal*. The *Reply* will only be accepted on the MHPS-provided template.

Once MHPS receives the *Notice of Appeal*, the *Response*, and the *Reply* (if applicable), it will provide those materials to the Appeals Committee. The Appeals Committee will discuss all appeals at once. During its review of the appeals, the Appeals Committee reserves the right to request additional information from both the athlete and the PSO/MSO.

After reviewing 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.

Once the Appeals Committee has reached its decision, it will contact the athlete and the PSO/MSO in writing to communicate its decision and the reasons therefore.

An athlete who has had his or her appeal denied is not permitted to submit a second appeal to the Appeals Committee on the same or different grounds.

Note: The PSO/MSO is encouraged to resolve disputes or disagreements informally with athletes who have not been nominated to avoid, wherever possible, formal appeals.

Quest for Gold Ontario Athlete Assistance Program Appeals Committee
c/o Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport,
777 Bay Street, Suite 702
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1S5
Fax: 416-314-6301

Deadline for an athlete to submit a Notice of Appeal:

Cycle 1 - 4:00 p.m. on October 27, 2011

Cycle 2 - 4:00 p.m. on January 26, 2012

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 MHPS 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 MHPS 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 and Sport'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 2011-2012.

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 Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport, 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.

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 MHPS at your earliest convenience to allow MHPS 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 Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport
777 Bay Street, Suite 702
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1S5

2011-2012 Ontario Card Program Deadlines

Cycle 1

October 17, 2011	PSO/MSOs publish DRAFT LIST of nominated Ontario Card athletes
October 24, 2011	Athletes complete Ontario Card application online at www.questforgold.ca
Appeals Process Deadlines:	
October 19, 2011	Athlete wanting to Appeal must contact their PSO/MSO for explanation of why they were not nominated
October 24, 2011	PSO/MSO sends written response to any athlete who requested details of why they were not nominated
4:00 pm on October 27, 2011	Athlete still wanting to appeal submits <i>“Athlete Notice of Appeal Template”</i>
4:00 pm on November 1, 2011	PSO/MSO responds to any Appeals by submitting <i>“PSO/MSO Response Template”</i>
November 2, 2011	Athlete receives copy of <i>“PSO/MSO Response Template”</i>
November 7, 2011	<i>“Athlete’s Reply Template”</i> deadline – where applicable
November 18, 2011	Appeals Committee notifies athletes and PSO/MSOs of outcome of appeals
November 18, 2011	PSO/MSOs publish FINAL LIST of nominated Ontario Card athletes

Cycle 2

January 13, 2012	PSO/MSOs publish DRAFT LIST of nominated Ontario Card athletes
January 20, 2012	Athletes complete Ontario Card application online at www.questforgold.ca
Appeals Process Deadlines:	
January 17, 2012	Athlete wanting to Appeal must contact their PSO/MSO for explanation of why they were not nominated
January 23, 2012	PSO/MSO sends written response to any athlete who requested details of why they were not nominated
4:00 pm on January 26, 2012	Athlete still wanting to appeal submits <i>“Athlete Notice of Appeal Template”</i>
4:00 pm on January 31, 2012	PSO/MSO responds to any Appeals by submitting <i>“PSO/MSO Response Template”</i>
February 1, 2012	Athlete receives copy of <i>“PSO/MSO Response Template”</i>
February 6, 2012	<i>“Athlete’s Reply Template”</i> deadline – where applicable
February 17, 2012	Appeals Committee notifies athletes and PSO/MSOs of outcome of appeals
February 17, 2012	PSO/MSOs publish FINAL LIST of nominated Ontario Card athletes