



2016-2017

**QUEST FOR
GOLD**

**Ontario Athlete
Assistance Program**

**Canada Card
Athlete Handbook**

Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport

Canada Card Athlete Handbook 2016-2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

How do athletes apply for their Canada Card?	2
Program Overview	3
Minimum Eligibility Requirements	6
Military Family Residency Exemption	11
Appeals	12
Illness, Injury or Pregnancy	12
Deadlines	13
Returning Funds – Withdrawal from Program	13

This Handbook is designed for Ontario athletes who have been nominated and accepted in the Sport Canada *Athlete Assistance Program* within the Government of Ontario's fiscal year of April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017.

Please review the contents of this Handbook prior to completing your on-line application. For assistance or further information please contact Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS) staff directly.

Forward any hard copy information to:

Quest for Gold - OAAP

Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport

777 Bay Street, 18th Floor

Toronto, ON M7A 1S5

Attention: Scott Cooper

How do athletes apply for their Canada Card?

Athletes shall review this Handbook to determine if they meet all program requirements. Eligible athletes shall apply on-line at: www.questforgold.ca.

Only those athletes who are Ontario residents, current recipients of the Sport Canada *Athlete Assistance Program (AAP)* and who meet the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport requirements detailed here should apply online.

Athletes will complete the following steps to submit their application:

- i) Apply on-line at www.questforgold.ca.
- ii) Previously funded applicants will login using the same email address used previously. If you no longer use that email, use it to gain access and then update your profile with your new email. **Do not create a new account.**
- iii) Previously funded applicants will use their same password. Use the “Forgot Password” button to retrieve a previous password.
- iv) Enter type of Sport Canada Card you receive (example: Dev, C1, SR1, SR2) and the number of months you receive carding. Confirm this with your NSO if unsure.

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 please.

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, or if you are unable to apply online and require a paper copy, please contact the Ministry c/o 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 2016-2017 *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.

The overarching goal of the *Quest for Gold* – OAAP is directly related to the High Performance Sport goal of the Canadian Sport Policy – that Canadians are systematically achieving world-class results at the highest levels of international competition – by improving 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. The Canada Card will provide additional 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.

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 Tourism, Culture 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 Tourism, Culture and Sport when requested. The Ministry will be performing random audit requests for receipts from carded athletes during this fiscal year.

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 2016-2017 *Quest for Gold* - OAAP

For 2016-2017 eligible athletes will receive carding status for one carding year starting from April 1, 2016 – March 31, 2017. All payments will be processed before March 31, 2017. 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 2016-2017. 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 Coaches Association of Ontario and the Canadian Sport Institute Ontario.

Minimum Sport and Athlete Eligibility Requirements

1. What are the minimum Canada Card eligibility requirements for athletes?

- Athlete must be a current recipient of the Sport Canada *Athlete Assistance Program*.
- Athlete must be a Canadian citizen or “Permanent Resident” (previously known as a “Landed Immigrant”).
- Athlete must be a permanent resident of Ontario for one year prior to his/her application for carding status.
- Athlete must be living in and continuing to train in Ontario. Exceptions will be made provided that the athlete can substantiate that they meet one of the following “Residency Exceptions”:
 - He/She is training out of province as part of a formal NSO-sanctioned training program;
 - He/She cannot receive the required level of training in Ontario and is out of the province **temporarily** during the year (i.e. lack of local facilities, coaching, competitions);
 - He/She must attend a post-secondary institution out-of-province because the course of study is not offered by an Ontario institution;
 - 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.

PROOF OF RESIDENCY:

The Ministry no longer requires athletes to submit copies of their personal identification to establish permanent Ontario residency. Alternatively, the Ministry will contact the athlete’s Provincial and National Sport Organizations (PSO and NSO) to confirm the athlete’s Ontario residency and that the athlete is representing Ontario when competing. This is a mandatory requirement as detailed in Article 6 of the Terms and Conditions found in the Athlete Application Form, as seen below:

Article 6: Program Requirements:

During the term of the Agreement, the Recipient shall compete exclusively on behalf of the Province of Ontario at National Championship events and for Canada at International Championship events, for a period of one year from the date the grant is approved and acknowledge Ontario as their permanent place of residence on athlete profiles, Media Guides, PSO/NSO websites, and in similar types of public communications.

- Athlete must be a member in good standing with PSO/MSO and/or NSO where applicable.
- Athlete must have signed an NSO Athlete Agreement. (MTCS will confirm with Sport Canada).
- Athlete must demonstrate a commitment and dedication to a proper training and competitive program.
- Athlete’s coach should be minimum Level 2 NCCP certified or trained status Competition Stream or the sport’s equivalent in the Instruction Stream, or be engaged in completing this training, as determined by the PSO/NSO;

- Athlete must not be under a sanction that prohibits competition as per the Canadian Anti-Doping Policy.
- 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.
- 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.

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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. How are athletes considered for Canada Card eligibility?

Ontario athletes who are carded for funding through Sport Canada's *Athlete Assistance Program (AAP)* within the Government of Ontario's fiscal year (April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017) and who continue to meet AAP and OAAP eligibility requirements will automatically be considered for Canada Card status under the OAAP. The Ministry will contact those athletes at both the email and at the Ontario mailing address provided by the athlete to Sport Canada.

Athletes are solely responsible for ensuring that their contact information is kept accurate and up-to-date with Sport Canada at all times. The Ministry has no responsibility for any consequences that may follow or losses that may be sustained because of errors or

omissions in Sport Canada's list of eligible Ontario athletes or for any errors in an athlete's contact information.

5. When am I eligible to apply for OAAP – Canada Card funding?

The timing of when athletes are contacted to apply for Canada Card status will vary depending on when the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport is informed by Sport Canada of an Ontario athlete's successful acceptance into Sport Canada's AAP.

Athletes will be invited to apply for *Quest for Gold* - OAAP Canada Card status based on the timelines identified by their NSO's Sport Canada Carding Cycle

Note: For further information on the nomination process and timelines related to Sport Canada's *Athlete Assistance Program*, please contact your National Sport Organization.

6. Enrolment in 2016-2017 Program and Payments

Canada Carded athletes will be enrolled into the OAAP after:

- Notification has been given by Sport Canada to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport that an Ontario athlete has been nominated and accepted in the Sport Canada *Athlete Assistance Program* within the Government of Ontario's fiscal year (April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017);
- The athlete's PSO and NSO have confirmed the athlete as a permanent Ontario resident with the Ministry; and
- The athlete has completed a Canada Card application form (application is available online) and submitted it by the appropriate deadline (application information will be sent by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport to all Sport Canada funded athletes identified as being from Ontario).

7. Do I need provide the MTCS a copy of my proof of Ontario residency?

The Ministry will no longer require athletes to submit a copy of an Ontario Driver's License or (photo) Health Card or Ontario Photo Card to establish permanent Ontario residency. Alternatively, the Ministry will contact the athlete's Provincial and National Sport Organizations (PSO/NSO) to confirm the athlete's Ontario residency and that the athlete is representing Ontario when competing.

8. 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 Athlete Assistance Program carding during any part of MTCS' fiscal year April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016 and/or any part of fiscal year April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017 and is no longer in receipt of Sport Canada Athlete Assistance shall not be eligible to receive *Quest for Gold* funding during fiscal year 2016-2017 (April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017.)

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.

Canada Card Exception (CCE)

Exceptions may apply to this rule (known as a **Canada Card Exception (CCE)**) 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 (e.g. reduction in Sport Canada carding allocation, injuries, etc.).

It is the sole responsibility of the athlete to contact the PSO/MSO Selection Committee in advance of the posted QFG Application (or Residency Exception) deadline to request a CCE. The athlete must submit, in writing, an explanation of why they have not been, or do not expect to be re-carded by their NSO. The submission must include a statement from the NSO, signed and dated on their letterhead, confirming that the athlete still has potential to return to the NSO's carding program in the future.

PSO/MSOs are required to contact MTCS in writing prior to the submission of the Athlete Nomination Form to seek individual Canada Card Exceptions. As a CCE is still subject to Appeal by another athlete during the Appeals Process, it is essential that all requests are based on a documented submission by the athlete, the content of which will be used in the "PSO Response" to any such Appeal.

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?

Effective August 1, 2013, the NCAA has revised their policies related to an athlete receiving funding from a government program (new language is bolded):

12.1.2.4.9 Exception for Training Expenses. An individual (prospective or enrolled student-athlete) may receive actual and necessary expenses [including grants, but not prize money, whereby the recipient has qualified for the grant based on his or her performance in a specific event(s)] to cover developmental training, coaching, facility usage, equipment, apparel, supplies, comprehensive health insurance, travel, room and board without jeopardizing the individual's eligibility for intercollegiate athletics, provided such expenses are approved and provided directly by the U.S.

Olympic Committee (USOC), the appropriate national governing body in the sport (or, for international student-athletes, the equivalent organization of that nation) **or a governmental entity.**

The effective date for this piece of legislation as it relates to **prospective student-athletes who have not started college** will apply differently than it will for **current student-athletes.**

Current student-athletes: The effective date for current student-athletes is August 1, 2013, meaning they cannot accept funds from a governmental entity **until after August 1, 2013.**

Prospective student-athletes: Individuals enrolling full time at a collegiate institution on or after August 1, 2013 are currently being certified under the new rule. In other words, a prospective student-athlete who has accepted these funds from a governmental entity or who will accept these funds prior to the August 1 date from a governmental entity will get the benefit of the new rule (e.g. will not be required to return the funds).

Any athlete considering an application to an NCAA institution is strongly encouraged to contact the NCAA Eligibility Center if they have any additional questions.

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 MTCS 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 MTCS 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

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

Appeals

Appeals will be allowed in writing from athletes who have not been granted Canada Card status.

If an athlete's application for Canada Card status is not accepted the athlete will be notified in writing. Appeals will be dealt with by an Appeals Committee comprised of representatives from the sport community.

Grounds for appeals will be limited strictly to issues related to permanent Ontario residency status.

The deadline for athletes to submit appeals to the Appeals Committee is January 25, 2017.

Appeals will only be accepted on the MTCS-provided template (typed or hand-printed, no hand-written entries) through email, regular post, registered mail, courier or delivered in person.

Appeals must be received by MTCS by noon on the deadline day as listed above. Appeals that are delivered personally or by courier shall be deemed to be received on the date of delivery.

Any/all information provided to the Appeals Committee may be shared with the athlete's PSO/MSO or NSO or Sport Canada by the Appeals Committee.

Quest for Gold Ontario Athlete Assistance Program Appeals Committee
c/o Sport, Recreation and Community Programs Division
Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport,
777 Bay Street, 18th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1S5 Fax: 416-314-7458

Illness, Injury or Pregnancy

Sport Canada's policy regarding illness, injury or pregnancy will apply insofar as it impacts the athlete's eligibility for Sport Canada's AAP and, as a result, the athlete's eligibility for Canada Card status under the OAAP. Questions related to an athlete's Sport Canada carding status in cases of illness, injury or pregnancy will be referred to an athlete's NSO.

Application Deadlines

Athletes must complete their online application and submit all required documentation by:
January 25th, 2017

Returning Funds – Withdrawal from Program

If an athlete chooses not to accept the *Quest for Gold* - OAAP Funding due to retirement from sport, or whatever the reason, it is important to contact MTCS at your earliest convenience to allow MTCS 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 Tourism, Culture and Sport
777 Bay Street, 18th Floor Toronto, Ontario M7A 1S5

Competing for Ontario and Canada

Canada Card athletes are reminded of the following condition that appears in Article 6 of the Terms and Conditions of the Athlete Application Form:

ARTICLE 6 PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Competing for Ontario and Canada. *During the term of the Agreement, the Recipient shall compete exclusively on behalf of the Province of Ontario at National Championship events and for Canada at International Championship events, for a period of one year from the date the grant is approved and acknowledge Ontario as their permanent place of residence on athlete profiles, Media Guides, PSO/NSO websites, and in similar types of public communications.*