



2014-2015

QUEST FOR
GOLD

Ontario Athlete
Assistance Program

Ontario Card
Athlete Handbook

Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport

Ontario Card Athlete Handbook 2014-2015

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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 Tourism, Culture 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 – November 24, 2014**
 Cycle 2 athletes - January 23, 2015

Athletes will need to know the following before applying online:

- Email address: 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.**
- Password: returning applicants will use their same password. Use the “Forgot Password” button to retrieve a previous password;
- Full address information;
- Name/contact information for personal Coach.

Each applicant must have a unique email address. The database will not allow multiple users to use the same email address. This must be 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.

On completion, 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 Tourism, Culture and Sport for assistance.

If you are unable to apply online and require a paper copy of the application please contact the Ministry of Tourism, Culture 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 2014-2015 *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. 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.**

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 Tourism, Culture 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 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. 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 2014-2015 *Quest for Gold* - OAAP

For 2014-2015 eligible athletes will receive carding status for one carding year starting from April 1, 2014 – March 31, 2015. All payments will be processed before March 31, 2015. 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 2014-2015. 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 and the Canadian Sport Institute Ontario.

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 Tourism, Culture and Sport as per the *MTCS 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. 2014 Olympic /Paralympic Winter Games or 2016 Olympic / Paralympic Summer Games;
 - ii. 2015 Canada Winter Games or 2017 Canada Summer Games;
 - iii. Those sports eligible to participate in the 2014 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 to the satisfaction of MTCS 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 "Permanent Resident" (previously a "Landed Immigrant").
- Athlete must be a permanent resident of Ontario **for one year prior** to his/her nomination for carding status, (and continue to be a permanent resident throughout the term of the agreement).
- Athletes who have achieved Canada Card status are not eligible for Ontario Cards.

Exceptions to these criteria, known as a "Residency Exception" will be considered **on a case specific basis by the PSO/MSO Selection Committee** provided that the athlete can substantiate in writing at the time of application/Residency Exception submission deadline their reason for living outside Ontario, as detailed below.

Residency Exception:

The PSO Selection Committee may grant a Residency Exception for an athlete if the athlete provides information to show one of the following:

- (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. **The athlete must submit written documentation to their PSO/MSO's Selection Committee by the posted deadline, clearly indicating how they meet a residency exception(s).**

Athletes applying for a Residency Exception related to exception (a) above, who are training at an NSO-approved National Training Centre MUST include a letter from the NSO outlining their support for the athlete, the progress the athlete is making and the athlete's potential to make the national team level.

Length of time living outside Ontario:

Athletes living outside Ontario for more than **30 consecutive days** within the ministry fiscal year 2014-2015 for athletic or academic purposes must demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the PSO/MSO Selection Committee, that appropriate training programs are in place and are being monitored by the PSO/MSO.

The onus is on the athlete to:

1. Provide a written plan outlining their training and competition plans to the PSO/MSO prior to their departure from Ontario, as part of their Residency Exception request; and
2. Adhere to the PSO/MSO-approved competition and training plan throughout the carding cycle. At a minimum, this requires regular (PSO/MSO to define frequency and method in their Selection Criteria) contact by the athlete with the PSO/MSO (PSO/MSO to define who to contact); and
3. Submit regular (PSO/MSO to define frequency) training logs to the PSO/MSO to track progress against the PSO/MSO-approved competition and training plan.

*****Athletes who were formally invited to and are currently participating in their NSO's national team training program are exempt from this requirement.*****

Athletes should refer to their sport's Selection Criteria document for complete details and deadlines for seeking a "Residency Exception" or "Canada Card Exception".

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 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 additional information.

Minimum eligibility requirements for athletes – continued:

- 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 2014-2015;
- 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;
- 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.

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, 2015 to March 31, 2016 would not be eligible for an Ontario Card in fiscal year April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015.

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 2014-2015 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 Tourism, Culture and Sport designate cards towards each discipline within that sport?

No, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture 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 Athlete Assistance Program carding during any part of MTCS' fiscal year April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014 and/or any part of fiscal year April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015 and is no longer in receipt of Sport Canada Athlete Assistance shall not be eligible to receive *Quest for Gold* funding during fiscal year 2014-2015 (April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015.)

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.

An athlete who was accepted into Sport Canada's Athlete Assistance Program during the MTCS fiscal year 2014-2015 but forfeited the carding by not re-locating to the NSO's centralized training centre is not eligible for an Ontario Card in 2014-2015.

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 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.

8. 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

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. 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 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.

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 Tourism, Culture 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 19 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.** Athletes listed as "Alternates" shall only apply if notified by their PSO/MSO of being transferred from Alternate to Nominated status.

Ontario Card program deadlines are detailed on page 19 of this Handbook.

NOTE: In the event of a conflict or inconsistency, the selection criteria established by the MTCS 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 MTCS. Appeals will be heard by an Appeals Committee comprised of representatives from the sport community, selected by the MTCS.

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.

Issues related to the specific content or selection requirements contained in the PSO/MSO Selection Criteria are not grounds for an appeal and should therefore be discussed directly with the leadership of the individual PSO/MSO.

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, as provided on the PSO/MSO's website. A Notice of Appeal will only be accepted from the athlete or their parent/guardian on the MTCS-provided template (typed or hand-printed, no hand-written entries) through email, regular post, registered mail, courier or delivered in person. One appeal cannot be written on behalf of multiple athletes. The Notice of Appeal must be received by MTCS by the posted deadline. Appeals that are delivered personally or by courier shall be deemed to be received on the date of delivery.

Once MTCS 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 MTCS 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. MTCS 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 MTCS, 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 MTCS-provided template.

Once MTCS 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 Tourism, Culture and Sport,
777 Bay Street, Suite 2302
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1S5 Fax: 416-314-6301

See page 19 for a complete list of Program deadlines.

Representing the Province of Ontario

All athletes are reminded of the following requirement of the Quest for Gold program, detailed in Article 6 of the Terms and Conditions: "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 events, for a period of one year from the date the grant is approved and acknowledge Ontario as your permanent place of residence on athlete profiles, Media Guides, PSO/NSO websites, and in similar types of public communications."

An athlete who is unable to meet this obligation should not apply.

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 MTCS 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 MTCS 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 Tourism, Culture 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 2014-2015.

Returning Funds – Withdrawal from Program

Any athlete who chooses not to accept the *Quest for Gold* - OAAP Funding due to their retirement from sport or their inability to meet their PSO/MSO's contractual obligations, must contact both MTCS and their PSO/MSO within 7 days of when they last competed on behalf of Ontario at a PSO/MSO or NSO-recognized event, requesting a QFG Withdrawal Form. As the funds in this program are limited, it is critical that MTCS receive immediate notification so that the funds can be allocated to the next eligible athlete within the sport's ranking list.

- **If the MTCS cheque has not been cashed:**
 - Athlete is to return the cheque to MTCS together with a copy of the completed Quest for Gold OAAP Withdrawal Form (available from MTCS upon notification of athlete's withdrawal from program).
 - MTCS will forward a copy of the completed Withdrawal Form to the PSO/MSO confirming that the athlete has withdrawn and their funding has been returned in full.
- **If the MTCS cheque has been cashed,** the funds must be returned to the Ministry in order to release the athlete from their contractual obligations with the Ministry and their PSO/MSO. Contractual obligations are for one year from the date of the Minister's approval letter. Fiscal 2013-14 Approval letters were dated February 6, 2014 (Cycle 1) and March 26, 2014 (Cycle 2).

- The prorated amount to be returned is calculated by the Ministry based on the earlier of:
 - a. the date when the athlete last competed for Ontario (i.e. the date of the last competition);or
 - b. the date on which the athlete was approved for funding by another province.
- MTCS will calculate the amount of funds to be returned based on the percentage of the year remaining between the Withdrawal Date and March 31 of the current fiscal year. This amount will be communicated to both the athlete and their PSO/MSO.
- The athlete's PSO/MSO must confirm with MTCS receipt of the Withdrawal Form and the accuracy of the Withdrawal Date.

Return all cheques to:

Quest for Gold - Ontario Athlete Assistance Program
 c/o Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport
 2302 - 777 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1S5

Personal cheques must be payable to "Ontario Ministry of Finance".

An athlete that does not follow this procedure will continue to be contractually obligated to their PSO/MSO.

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 Tourism, Culture 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.

2014-2015 Ontario Card Program Deadlines

Cycle 1:

November 13, 2014	PSO/MSOs publish DRAFT LIST of nominated Ontario Card athletes
November 24, 2014	Athletes complete Ontario Card application online at www.questforgold.ca
Appeals Process Deadlines:	
November 17, 2014	Athlete wanting to Appeal must contact their PSO/MSO for explanation of why they were not nominated
November 20, 2014	PSO/MSO sends written response to any athlete who requested details of why they were not nominated
12 noon on November 24, 2014	Athlete still wanting to appeal submits <i>“Athlete Notice of Appeal Template”</i>
12 noon on November 26, 2014	PSO/MSO responds to any Appeals by submitting <i>“PSO/MSO Response Template”</i>
November 26, 2014	Athlete receives copy of <i>“PSO/MSO Response Template”</i>
12 noon on November 28, 2014	<i>“Athlete’s Reply Template”</i> deadline – where applicable
December 15, 2014	Appeals Committee notifies athletes and PSO/MSOs of outcome of appeals
December 17, 2014	PSO/MSOs publish FINAL LIST of nominated Ontario Card athletes

Cycle 2:

January 14, 2015	PSO/MSOs publish DRAFT LIST of nominated Ontario Card athletes
January 23, 2015	Athletes complete Ontario Card application online at www.questforgold.ca
Appeals Process Deadlines:	
January 19, 2015	Athlete wanting to Appeal must contact their PSO/MSO for explanation of why they were not nominated
January 21, 2015	PSO/MSO sends written response to any athlete who requested details of why they were not nominated
12 noon on January 26, 2015	Athlete still wanting to appeal submits <i>“Athlete Notice of Appeal Template”</i>
12 noon on February 2, 2015	PSO/MSO responds to any Appeals by submitting <i>“PSO/MSO Response Template”</i>
February 3, 2015	Athlete receives copy of <i>“PSO/MSO Response Template”</i>
February 6, 2015	<i>“Athlete’s Reply Template”</i> deadline – where applicable
February 25, 2015	Appeals Committee notifies athletes and PSO/MSOs of outcome of appeals
February 27, 2015	PSO/MSOs publish FINAL LIST of nominated Ontario Card athletes