

# Quest for Gold



## **ATHLETE HANDBOOK**

Ontario Card

2007/2008

Ministry of Health Promotion

# Ontario Card Athlete Handbook

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## **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 of three funding streams in 2007-2008 under the *Quest for Gold* Program. In addition to the OAAP, the *Quest for Gold* Program will also provide 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 net revenues generated by the *Quest for Gold* lottery game established by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG).

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

Specific objectives of the program are:

- a) To help athletes continue their pursuit of athletic excellence at the highest levels of national and international competition;
- b) To encourage athletes to stay in Ontario to live and train;
- c) To compensate athletes for earnings lost while training;
- d) To enable athletes to successfully pursue excellence in sport while fulfilling their educational goals;
- e) To increase athlete access to high performance coaching;
- 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 Ontario athletes to be carded at the Provincial level (Ontario Card);
- Ensuring that National Sport, Provincial Sport and Multi-Sport Organizations (NSOs / PSOs / MSOs) have appropriate selection procedures and criteria in place for the nomination of Ontario athletes to be carded at the national and provincial level;

- Providing OAAP carding support in a consistent and timely manner to Ontario athletes who meet their sport-specific carding criteria in those sports that meet OAAP eligibility requirements;
- 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 to be used to offset tuition costs so that athletes can achieve their academic goals;
- Ensuring that NSOs / PSOs / MSOs have appropriate training and competitive opportunities in place and are 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 limited to Ontario athletes who are carded by Sport Canada. The 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 – dependant on funding available.

Ontario Card - Direct financial assistance to Ontario junior aged athletes identified by PSOs / MSOs.

Athletes cannot be eligible in more than one carding designation.

Financial assistance provided will go directly to athletes (referred to as “carded” athletes).

Both the sport and athlete eligibility criteria must be met before financial assistance can be awarded.

### **4. What are the eligible expenses that a carded athlete can spend funding on obtained through the *Quest for Gold* - Ontario Athlete Assistance Program?**

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).

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

The Government of Ontario was required to issue OAAP-funded athletes a T4A form for any grants paid in 2006, but subsequently obtained an interpretation from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) on how the financial assistance in the T4As and the related athlete expenses were to be reported.

The CRA has advised that, upon review of the program, the benefits received from the *Quest for Gold* - OAAP Program will generally be received by recipients tax free within the meaning of the Federal *Income Tax Act*.

OAAP-funded athletes may contact Scott Cooper at the Ministry of Health Promotion, (416) 314-7692, if they wish to obtain a copy of the April 2, 2007 CRA letter that provides an interpretation of the *Income Tax Act* as it relates to OAAP grants. If OAAP-funded athletes have any questions regarding their personal tax situation, they should contact the CRA at 1-800-267-6999 or on-line at [www.cra-arc.gc.ca](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca).

Athletes who receive an OAAP grant in 2007 will not be issued a T4A form for grants received in the 2007 calendar year.

**6. Payments in 2007-2008**

For 2007-2008, eligible athletes will receive carding status for one carding year starting from April 1, 2007 – March 31, 2008. All payments will be processed before March 31, 2008. The amount of total payment to eligible athletes will be determined at a later date, after total net revenues generated by the *Quest for Gold* lottery game have been reported by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation.

## **Minimum Sport and Athlete Eligibility Requirements for Ontario Cards**

### **1. What are the minimum eligibility requirements and responsibilities for Provincial Sport and Multi-Sport organizations?**

#### General Sport Eligibility Criteria

- Sport must have a Provincial Sport Organization / Multi-Sport Organization (PSO / MSO) that is formally recognized by the Ministry of Health Promotion as per the Ministry's Sport Recognition Policy.
- Sport and sport discipline must be a participant in the regular program of one of:
  - A. 2006 Olympic / Paralympic Winter Games, 2008 Olympic / Paralympic Summer Games, 2010 Olympic / Paralympic Winter Games;
  - B. 2007 Canada Winter Games or 2009 Canada Summer Games;
  - C. Ontario Games (youth) - eligible sports in this category may fluctuate depending on eligibility in a particular Games event.

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

#### General Athlete Eligibility Criteria

- Athlete must be a Canadian citizen or landed immigrant.
- Athlete must be a resident of Ontario for one year prior to his or her nomination for carding status.
- Athlete must be training and continuing to train in Ontario. Exceptions will be made providing that the athlete can substantiate that:
  - 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, competition);
  - He/She must attend a post-secondary institution out-of-province because the course of study is not available to him/her in Ontario;
  - It is more financially feasible to attend a post-secondary institution out-of-province, or other extenuating circumstances that require the athlete to be out of the province.
- Athlete must be a member in good standing with PSO / MSO and National Sport Organization (NSO) where applicable.
- Athlete must demonstrate a commitment and dedication to a proper training and competitive program.
- Athlete must be instructed by a coach that has been trained and certified in the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) Level 2 or equivalent.
- Athlete must not be under sanction as per the Canadian or World Anti-Doping Policy.

- Athlete must be attending an educational institution full-time (i.e. primary and secondary schools).
- Exceptions will be made providing that the athlete can substantiate that his/her training will not allow for full-time attendance or if an athlete requires special needs that preclude full or part-time attendance (e.g. Paralympic athlete).
- Athletes who have completed their area of study at the secondary level and who continue to train towards participation in major national or international competitions will also be given consideration.
- If eligible, the athlete must compete, and continue to compete for Ontario during the carding year at Canada Games and other national competitions involving provincial team competitions.
- Athletes who have achieved Canada Card status are not eligible for Ontario Cards.
- Eligibility will be limited to Ontario junior aged athletes (only exception is for PSOs / MSOs using 30% of Ontario Card allotment for Sr. level athletes not funded by Sport Canada) who have been identified as a next generation national team athlete as demonstrated by:
  - Identification within the NSO pool of identified next generation national team athletes for the last two competitive seasons; OR
  - Results at regional championships, national championships (junior and/or senior) or other recognized national/international competitions over the last two competitive seasons; OR
  - Representation on a Canadian National Team (developmental and/or junior). Athletes training for Canada Games or Provincial teams may also be considered.

**3. Are athletes attending foreign post-secondary educational institutions on an athletic scholarship eligible for Ontario Card status?**

Athletes who are attending any foreign post-secondary educational institution (including National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) institutions) and are receiving an athletic scholarship in any sport are not eligible for Ontario Card status in 2007-2008.

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

The onus is entirely on the athlete to determine the impact of accepting OAAP funding on current or future NCAA eligibility and deciding 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 Ministry accepts no responsibility for any consequences that may follow, or losses that may be sustained in connection with an athlete's eligibility or ineligibility for a NCAA scholarship, or in connection with an athlete's eligibility or ineligibility to compete in a non-scholarship NCAA sport.

The Ministry strongly urges the PSO / MSO and individual athletes to contact the NCAA Clearinghouse 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](http://www.ncaa.org)

Clearinghouse mailing address:  
 NCAA Clearinghouse  
 301 ACT Drive  
 Box 4043  
 Iowa City, IA 52243-4043

Clearinghouse customer service hours:  
 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Central Time Monday through Friday

- Phone numbers (international callers):  
 Customer Service Line - 319/337-1492
- Fax Number: 319/337-1556

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**5. 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?**

Ontario’s Ministry of Health Promotion provides direct financial assistance to Ontario’s high-performance amateur athletes through the OAAP. A small number of the athletes receiving assistance have a disability. Some of these athletes may be in receipt of or beneficiaries of assistance provided through the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) or Ontario Works.

According to Ontario Works and ODSP, 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 the OAAP was first launched.

If you have any questions related to Ontario Works and ODSP payments please contact the nearest Regional Office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

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 or scholarships and accepts no responsibility for any consequences that may follow, or losses that may be sustained in relation to such programs or scholarships.

**6. Are professional / semi-professional athletes or athletes who have normal living and training costs covered eligible for Ontario Cards?**

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

**7. 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.

**8. What if athletes are under 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.

## **Athlete Selection Requirements and 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's / MSO's Board of Directors in advance of the selection process. The selection criteria must be objective, transparent and free of conflict of interest.

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

Each eligible PSO / MSO will establish an "Athlete Selection Committee" that will be responsible for developing a "sport specific athlete selection criteria"

for the distribution of the organization's Ontario Card allotment. 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 PSO / MSO will also publish or make known to members the nominated list of athletes for Ontario carding status.

Ontario Card program deadlines are detailed on page 14 of this handbook.

### **3. How do athletes apply for Ontario Cards?**

All nominated athletes are asked to apply on-line at [www.questforgold.ca](http://www.questforgold.ca). The system is available from anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

Please check first with your PSO / MSO to confirm the process for nominating athletes in your sport. This may impact on the application process.

If you require a paper copy of the application please write to:

*Quest for Gold - OAAP Canada Card*  
c/o Sport and Recreation Branch  
Ministry of Health Promotion  
18<sup>th</sup> Floor, 393 University Avenue Suite 1802  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 2S1  
[Scott.Cooper@ Ontario.ca](mailto:Scott.Cooper@Ontario.ca)

## **Appeals**

### **1. Can an athlete not nominated or accepted for Ontario Card status appeal the decision of not being nominated and/or be provided with carding status?**

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

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

- Whether or not the PSO / MSO has completed the selection process in accordance with their own published selection criteria and related procedures;

- Whether or not the selection criteria developed and applied by the PSO / MSO were fair, objective, transparent and free from discrimination or conflict of interest.

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

- a) Direct the PSO / MSO to redo the selection process using the correct criteria/process and submit a new list of nominated athletes;
- b) Deny the appeal;
- c) Allow the appeal and nominate the appellant for carding status.

The deadline for athletes to submit appeals to the Appeals Committee is **November 16, 2007 for Cycle 1 and February 8, 2008 for Cycle 2.**

The appeals will only be accepted in writing through regular post, registered mail, courier or delivered in person. Appeals that are delivered personally or by courier shall be deemed to be received on the date of delivery. Appeals that are delivered by regular post or registered mail shall be deemed to be received three days after the date of mailing.

**Appeals submitted by e-mail or fax will not be accepted.**

Appeals can be directed to:

*Quest for Gold* - Ontario Athlete Assistance Program Appeals Committee  
 c/o Sport and Recreation Branch  
 Ministry of Health Promotion  
 18th Floor, 393 University Avenue  
 Toronto, Ontario M7A 2S1

## **The PSO / MSO - Athlete Agreement**

### **1. What is the purpose of the PSO / MSO - Athlete Agreement and what does it specify?**

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

- Specific MHP and PSO / MSO policies that will be applicable to the Ontario carded athlete.

Payment of the grant awarded through the Ontario Card is contingent on having a signed PSO / MSO - Athlete Agreement.

## **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:
  - a) For the period of time for which the athlete is unable to fulfil the training and competition commitments that are part of the normal PSO / MSO - Athlete Agreement and;
  - b) 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 to prioritize and card injured, ill or pregnant athletes that is clear, consistent and not arbitrary (this policy must be transparent and accessible).

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

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

An athlete may want, for reasons related to injury, illness or pregnancy, to voluntarily withdraw temporarily or permanently from normal carded-athlete training and competition requirements.

In these circumstances the PSO / MSO must notify the Sport and Recreation Branch of the Ministry of Health Promotion so that the athlete can be removed from the Ontario Carded list. The Ministry reserves the right to request the repayment of the whole or any part of the Grant.

## 2007-2008 Ontario Card Program Deadlines

### Cycle 1

Aug 31, 2007	PSO / MSO posts athlete selection criteria
Nov 2, 2007	PSO / MSO publish list of carded athletes
Nov 16, 2007	Ontario Card appeal deadline
Nov 20, 2007	Appeal Committee reviews appeals
Dec 7, 2007	List of Cycle 1 - 2007-2008 Ontario carded finalized
Dec 10, 2007	Funding processed

### Cycle 2

Oct 5, 2007	PSO / MSO posts athlete selection criteria
Jan 25, 2008	PSO / MSO publish list of carded athletes
Feb 8, 2008	Ontario Card appeal deadline
Feb 12, 2008	Appeal Committee reviews appeals
Feb 25, 2008	List of Cycle 2 - 2007-2008 Ontario carded finalized
Feb 28, 2008	Funding processed

## What cycle is my sport in?

Alpine - Para.	CYCLE 2	Judo	CYCLE 2
Alpine	CYCLE 2	Lacrosse	CYCLE 2
Amputee	CYCLE 1	Lawn Bowls	CYCLE 2
Archery	CYCLE 2	Modern Pent.	CYCLE 1
Athletics	CYCLE 1	Ringette	CYCLE 2
Badminton	CYCLE 2	Rowing	CYCLE 2
Baseball	CYCLE 2	Rugby	CYCLE 2
Basketball	CYCLE 1	Sailing	CYCLE 2
Biathlon	CYCLE 1	Shooters	CYCLE 2
Blind Sports	CYCLE 2	Skate	CYCLE 1
Bobsleigh	CYCLE 2	Snowboard	CYCLE 2
Boxing	CYCLE 1	Softball	CYCLE 2
Canoe	CYCLE 1	Speed Skating	CYCLE 1
Cerebral Palsy	CYCLE 2	Squash	CYCLE 2
Cross Country	CYCLE 1	Swim	CYCLE 1
Curling - Para.	CYCLE 2	Synchro	CYCLE 2
Curling	CYCLE 2	Table Tennis	CYCLE 2
Cycling	CYCLE 1	Tae Kwon Do	CYCLE 2
Dive	CYCLE 1	Tennis	CYCLE 2
Equestrian	CYCLE 2	Triathlon	CYCLE 1
Fencing	CYCLE 2	Volleyball	CYCLE 2
Field Hockey	CYCLE 1	Water Polo	CYCLE 2
Freestyle	CYCLE 2	Water Ski	CYCLE 2
Golf	CYCLE 2	Weightlifting	CYCLE 1
Gymnastics	CYCLE 2	Wheelchair Sports	CYCLE 1
Handball	CYCLE 2	- (Athletics)	CYCLE 2
Hockey - W	CYCLE 2	Wrestling	CYCLE 1

**\*Contact your PSO / MSO for details on your sport's selected Cycle\***

## Program Information

For more information on the OAAP Ontario Card please contact your PSO / MSO.

Contact information can be found at:

[www.sportalliance.com](http://www.sportalliance.com)

Click on "Links"