



National Para Hockey Program

ATHLETE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
PROCESS, ELIGIBILITY & CRITERIA FOR NOMINATION

2023-24 Season

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1. NATIONAL TEAM PROGRAM

The National Para Hockey Team Program under the auspices of Hockey Canada consists of selected senior and development players based on training and competition standards. In general, the National Para Hockey Program consists of two competition teams: i) Senior National Team, and ii) Development Team. The National Team Program utilizes the Para Hockey 'Gold Medal Profile' to evaluate player suitability to be selected to national team programs and to be eligible for Sport Canada 'carding' nomination.

The National Team Program provides players with a number of training camp and competition opportunities to demonstrate their performance against performance standards and to contribute to achieving Team Canada's performance goals. The Program also consists of player support in the decentralized training environment in which players are expected to train on-ice and off-ice with identified coaches. National Team players have been organized into Training Groups/ Training Centres in, Calgary, Montreal and Toronto.

2. NATIONAL TEAM CYCLE / SCHEDULE

The National Team quadrennial cycle is based on a winter Paralympic cycle. A periodized approach has been adopted that identifies specific training periods for players.

JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
General Preparation			Specific Preparation		Pre-Comp	Competition	Training		Pre-Comp	Competition*	

**Note: 2026 Paralympic Games are in March*

Para Hockey is considered a winter sport. It is played domestically and internationally throughout the autumn, winter and spring. The seasons are as follows for the quadrennial:

Season #1: June 2022 – May 2023 / **Season #2:** June 2023 – May 2024

Season #3: June 2024 – May 2025 / **Season #4:** June 2025 – May 2026

For the 2022-2026 Quadrennial, the proposed schedule for National Team and National Development Team is based on the following key IPC and Hockey Canada events (subject to final approval):

Year	Date	Event	Location
Year 1	November 2022	Para Hockey Cup	Bridgewater, NS
	May 2023	Défi sportif Altergo (Development Team USA Series)	Montreal, QC
	May 2023	WPIH Championships	Moose Jaw, SK
Year 2	December 2023	Para Hockey Cup	Quispamsis, NB
	May 2024	Défi sportif Altergo (Development Team USA Series)	Montreal, QC
	May 2024	WPIH Championships	Canada (TBA)
Year 3	December 2024	Para Hockey Cup	TBA
	May 2025	Défi sportif Altergo (Development Team USA Series)	Montreal, QC
	May 2025	WPIH Championships	USA (TBA)
Year 4	December 2026	Para Hockey Cup	TBA
	March 2026	Paralympic Games	Milan-Cortina, Italy
	May 2026	Défi sportif Altergo (Development Team USA Series)	Montreal, QC

3. NATIONAL TEAM SELECTION

Selection to the National Para Hockey Team is based on the same criteria used for nominating athletes for the Sport Canada Athlete Assistance Program (AAP). However, selection to the National Team Program is not contingent on being 'carded'. Players may be selected to the National Para Hockey Team despite not achieving minimum thresholds for carding. Athletes who receive AAP support will automatically be considered part of the National Team Program but will not be guaranteed selection to camps and competitions.

Players will be identified as being part of the National Team Program following the National Showcase & Selection Camp in September. The threshold for selection to the National Team Program will vary from year-to-year based on competition and training needs. National Team Program players will be invited to camps and competitions throughout the season based on their performance, training progress (and monitoring compliancy), competition level, and team requirements (i.e. injury replacements, style of play requirements, etc.). A National Para Hockey Program Depth Chart will continuously be updated and managed to determine player eligibility for camps and competitions.

National Team Program players will be afforded support from Hockey Canada and will be expected to sign the Hockey Canada Athlete Agreement. Depth players may be added to the National Team Program for 'one-off' events such as development camps as injury replacements and/or to evaluate player progress against performance standards. Players may be added throughout the season to the National Team Program based on subjective and objective scores and Depth Chart placement.

4. SPORT CANADA CARDING

The following sections describe the criteria that will be used by Hockey Canada (HC) to nominate athletes for Sport Canada's Athlete Assistance Program (AAP).

Hockey Canada's National High Performance Para Hockey Program has been allocated the equivalent of 23 senior (SR) cards – a total value of \$487,140. This allocation may be split into Senior or Development Cards. The number of cards allocated by Sport Canada is subject to change – in which case, there may need to be adjustments to the allotment of cards.

The carding cycle is from October 1st through September 30th in each year.

Athletes approved by Sport Canada for the AAP may be eligible for a living and training allowance, tuition support (in a Sport Canada approved University, College program or other post-secondary institution), deferred tuition support, and special needs assistance. Athletes funded through the AAP receive a monthly financial stipend as follows:

Card type	Monthly stipend
Senior International Card (SR1/SR2)	\$1,765
Senior National Card (SR)	\$1,765
Senior Probationary Card (C1)	\$1,060
Development Card (D)	\$1,060

Approved athletes must be nominated a minimum of 4 months, and up to a maximum of 12 months.

More information on the AAP can be found at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance.html>.

4.1 Eligibility Standards

Athletes selected to the National Team Program are eligible to be nominated for funding support (carding) through the AAP.

To be considered eligible for AAP assistance in Hockey Canada's National Para Hockey Program, an athlete must:

- Have a medically-documented physical disability that meets the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) classification standards for Para Ice Hockey;
- Be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada at the beginning of the carding cycle for which the athlete is being nominated. Permanent residents must live in Canada for the full year preceding the carding cycle for which the athlete is being considered for AAP support;
- Be eligible to represent Canada, under the eligibility requirements of the IPC as it pertains to citizenship or residency status, at major international competitions, including World Championships, at the beginning of the carding cycle for which the athlete is being nominated;
- Be a registered member in good standing of Hockey Canada, and in good standing with their provincial branch;
- Sign an Athlete Agreement, complete the Athlete Assistance Program Application Form for the year in question, and complete the required CCES on-line anti-doping courses;
- Meet one of the carding criteria outlined in section 4.3 below;
- Maintain a training and competitive hockey program approved by Hockey Canada throughout the carding cycle.

An athlete that is nominated for the AAP, must continue to fulfill these conditions to maintain their eligibility for funding support.

4.2 Decision-Making Process

The final recommendations on nominations will be made on behalf of Hockey Canada by the Manager, Para Hockey, in collaboration with the National Team Head Coach and the balance of the coaching staff.

Sport Canada reviews all nominations put forward by Hockey Canada and approves them in accordance with the Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) policies and Hockey Canada approved carding criteria.

Special allowances may be made for athletes in extraordinary cases who may not have fully participated in the selection process but whom have exhibited the potential to be a National Team Program member, and whose potential will be most enhanced through financial support. In such cases, funding would only be allocated if it is available.

Athletes that do not achieve the minimum standards will not be carded, regardless of the number of cards available. Additionally, athletes that achieve the standards, are not guaranteed to be awarded a card. Final selections to the National Team will be based on the Game Rankings, players who complement the Winning Style of Play (WSP), on and off-ice testing results, and players who exhibit characteristics conducive to team cohesion, learning and contribute to a positive culture.

Consideration will also be given to athlete trending and roster design looking beyond the current year – with the idea that certain decisions may be relative to an athlete's likelihood of being part of the roster at the next Paralympic Games. In such cases, an athlete who is trending downward and is anticipated not to be in contention for selection to the Paralympic roster, might not be nominated. Conversely, an athlete who is

trending upwards and is anticipated to be in contention for a Paralympic roster spot may be selected to ensure his/her development is maximized in the lead-up to the Paralympic year (see 4.4.i)

4.3 Carding Criteria

CATEGORIES & DEFINITIONS OVERVIEW

- A. Senior Card categories include SR1, SR2, SR or C1
 - Senior International carding criteria (SR1/SR2): finish in the top 8 and top half of the field at the World Championships or Paralympic Games.
 - Senior National carding criteria (SR/C1): members of the National Team. Athletes that achieve the Senior National card criteria for the first time will be funded at the senior probationary card (C1) level.

- B. Development Card categories include D
 - Development carding criteria (D): intended to support the development needs of younger athletes who clearly demonstrate the potential to achieve the Senior Card international criteria but are not yet able to meet the Senior Card criteria.

4.3.1 Sport Canada International Eligibility Criteria: (SR1/SR2 cards)

Senior International cards are valid for two consecutive years, with the card for the first year referred to as SR1 and the card for the second year referred to as SR2. To be eligible for the SR1 the player must have competed as a member of the Senior National team that placed in the top 8 and top half of the field at the most recent World Championships or Paralympics. The second year of carding (SR2) is contingent on the athlete meeting the National Senior card criteria, being re-nominated by Hockey Canada and participating in a training and competitive program approved by Hockey Canada. The athlete must also sign an Athlete/NSO Agreement and complete an AAP Application Form for the year in question.

Note: In a Paralympic Year, only the Paralympic result can provide SR1 status. Results achieved at World Championships will not be used for awarding new SR1 cards.

4.3.1.1 Injury Cards (SR2 Injury cards)

- An athlete whom Hockey Canada believes would have met the SR national criteria, but who failed to do so strictly related to health/injury reasons, may be nominated for an SR2 Injury card (see 4.3.4 below for additional health related circumstances).

4.3.2 Hockey Canada's National Senior Card Eligibility Criteria: (SR/C1 cards)

National criteria identify athletes who have the potential to achieve international criteria. Senior Cards based on national criteria are normally awarded for one year and are called SR or C1 Cards. Athletes who meet the national criteria for Senior Cards for the first time are awarded C1 cards and are funded at the Development Card level.

4.3.2.1 Probationary Period for Senior Cards (C1 cards)

A probationary card has been established for the first year an athlete has satisfied the national criteria for a Senior Card. Athletes will be funded at the Development level in the first year they meet the national

criteria for a Senior Card even if they have previously been carded at the Development level. These cards are designated as C1 Cards. If however, the athlete has been carded at the SR1 or SR2 level before meeting the national criteria for the Senior Card, the athlete will be awarded a Senior Card (SR).

4.3.2.2 Number Of Years An Athlete May Be Carded At The Senior National Level

- An athlete is expected to progress in their results in order to maintain Senior card status. Once an athlete has been carded for more than 5 years at the Senior National levels, the athlete must meet the International Senior carding criteria or clearly demonstrate continued progress toward being selected on the final roster of the Senior National Team, to be recommended for additional years of carding support.
- Athletes that have reached this maximum number of years at Senior carding will be informed by HC of the minimum standard they must meet to be eligible for any additional year(s) of AAP support.

4.3.3 Development Cards (D cards)

An athlete who meets one of the following criteria is eligible for nomination at the D card level:

- National Development Team prospects who are involved in competition and training programs with the backing and support of Hockey Canada for a minimum of 20 days per year.
- Players named to the National Development Team and listed as members of the National Athlete Pool, in compliance with the requirements of the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sports (CCES).
- Exceptional cases may be made for goaltenders who play a pivotal role within the Senior National Team Depth Chart but do not meet the targeted qualifications for Development Team carding.
- In the above cases, athletes who accept Development card funding agree to:
 - a. Participate in National Team Programs as directed by Hockey Canada or the National Team Head Coach;
 - b. Participate in year-round training programs and in periodic testing and regular monitoring as directed by Hockey Canada, the National Team Head Coach or National Team staff.

4.3.3.1 Number Of Years An Athlete May Be Carded At The Development Level

- There are no limits to the number of years an athlete may be carded at the Development Level so long as they continue to show high-performance potential towards being selected on the final roster of the Senior National Team.
- Athletes who have previously been carded at the Senior Card level (C1, SR, SR1, SR2) may not be carded at the Development level for more than two years other than for exceptional circumstances at Sport Canada's sole discretion.

4.3.4 Health-related cards

At the end of a carding cycle during which an athlete has, for strictly health-related reasons (family emergencies would also apply), not achieved the standards required for the renewal of carded status, he/she may be considered for re-nomination for the upcoming carding period under the following conditions:

- In the view of Hockey Canada, the athlete's failure to attain the applicable carding standards is strictly related to the injury or illness;
- 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/her injury or illness;

- Hockey Canada, based on its technical judgment and that of a HC 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/her long-term commitment to high-performance training and competition goals, as well as the intention to pursue full high-performance training and competition throughout the carding period for which the athlete wishes to be renewed, despite not having met the carding criteria.

4.4 Nomination Process

Because of the limited card quota available, the number of months an athlete is nominated for carding will be based on the following:

- a) The card quota established by Sport Canada;
- b) The athlete's position on the Depth Chart;
- c) Ability to fit the overall team style of play (WSP);
- d) Evaluation during the year in competitive events (event rankings);
- e) Factors related to team cohesion and team dynamics (overall character/fit);
- f) Experience in international competition;
- g) Commitment to the prescribed individual training program, demonstrated through attendance at training sessions and competitions throughout the year and submission of mandated training reports to the team staff (monitored through daily investment standards);
- h) The athlete's training environment;
- i) The future potential of an athlete to compete in the next Paralympic Games will be considered.

Note: Within each priority, athletes will be nominated based on their position on the overall Depth Chart. Additional assessment tools may be used, including scouting by the Coaching Staff at any event/competition throughout the past season. Consideration will also be given to analysis of game videos, game statistics and game results. All of the aforementioned information will be used to assess minimum standards that will determine the athlete's ranking on the National Depth Chart, updated annually in alignment with the 'Own the Podium' Review and each September at the conclusion of the National Team Selection Camp.

4.5 Hockey Canada Depth Chart Development

Following the completion of the hockey season (typically April of each year), the Manager, Para Hockey, in collaboration with the National Team Head Coach – and with input from the Assistant Coaches, Development Team Head Coach and Scouts – will establish a Preliminary National Depth Chart, by position, of every player involved in the National Para Hockey High Performance Program throughout the season. Invitations to summer training groups and the National Team Selection Camp will be derived from this list of athletes. Non National Para Hockey High Performance Program players evaluated over the course of the season may be included in this list. If Hockey Canada chooses to submit a preliminary recommendation to Sport Canada for AAP, this depth chart will be used.

- Prior to submitting the final nominations for carding to Sport Canada a 'Final Depth Chart' will be established at the conclusion of the annual National Team Selection Camp (September of each year)
- Ranking in the National Para Hockey High Performance Program Depth Chart will be based on:
 - Event Rankings (completed at the conclusion of each event)
 - Game Rankings (completed following all competitions – including Red vs. White games)

- Roster Design: fit within the Winning Style of Play
- On and Off-ice testing results and commitment to prescribed training programs (investment)
- Character evaluations (contribution to a positive team culture)

4.6 Carding Minimum Standards

To be eligible to receive full funding at any carding level (12 months of living and training allowance plus tuition where applicable), the following minimum standards must be in place:

- Participation in a National Team program (Development Program applies) for a minimum duration of sixty (60) days. This minimum duration includes:
 1. National Para Hockey Team Events, Camps and Hub Training (Development Program applies)
 2. Athletes must comply with individualized year-round intensive training programs that are supervised or monitored by the National Team Exercise Physiologist (or designated approved affiliate), and the National Team Strength & Conditioning Coach. Workouts must be completed per the prescribed program and at a quality considered to be high performance for para hockey athletes.
 3. In accordance with the above, athletes are required in the Daily Training Environment (DTE) to routinely 'log' their prescribed workouts, complete regular Hooper MacKinnons and 'Daily Questions', and to wear their provided heart rate monitors as requested.

A reduced quantity of months of AAP Living and Training support may be allocated to athletes involved in at least thirty (30) days of National Team programming.

4.7 Hockey Canada Carded Athlete Requirements

In order to receive and maintain their AAP support, carded athletes must:

- Attend all scheduled activities they are invited to participate in (e.g. once invited an athlete must attend all camps, events, or training sessions);
- Follow their prescribed, individualized year-round intensive training programs as provided by Hockey Canada;
- Submit their training logs as reasonably requested, as prescribed by the program established by Hockey Canada and its affiliated Integrated Support Staff – in accordance with the 'Investment Standards Policy' (e.g. training logs must be submitted to Hockey Canada and/or designated staff);
- Perform all fitness testing as prescribed by the program established by Hockey Canada;
- Complete the CCES online anti-doping courses, True Sport Clean 101 and Sport Canada - Athlete Assistance Program courses, at the beginning of each new carding cycle and at times thereafter as required by Sport Canada;
- Comply with the requirements, standards and expectations of National Team athletes as outlined within the Hockey Canada Athlete Agreement.

Hockey Canada will implement and facilitate a monitoring plan for each athlete that will allow an evaluation of each athlete's individual training plan, provide feedback and measure progress accomplished by the athlete.

Notwithstanding Sport Canada policy for special situations described in section 9 of the AAP policy ('Injury, Illness or Pregnancy'), if a carded athlete does not submit training logs or monitoring reports (as scheduled) or fails to perform a fitness test (within the deadlines set), then the following process will be applied:

- **1st occurrence:** written notification advising the athlete that they must comply with the requirement to retain their carding status. They will have 7 days to comply accordingly.
- **2nd occurrence:** Manager, Para Hockey will recommend to Sport Canada an immediate withdrawal of the athlete's carding. The athlete will be removed from the Hockey Canada Depth Chart and will not be considered for further Hockey Canada National or Development Program activities.

4.8 Appeals Process

Appeals of Hockey Canada AAP nomination/re-nomination decisions or of a Hockey Canada's recommendation to withdraw carding may be pursued only through Hockey Canada's review process, which includes the right to refer the matter to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC). Appeals of AAP Decision made under Section 6 (Application for and Approval of Cards) or Section 11 (Withdrawal of Carded Status) may be pursued through Section 13 of the AAP Policies, Procedures and Guidelines outlined in the following weblink:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html#a14>