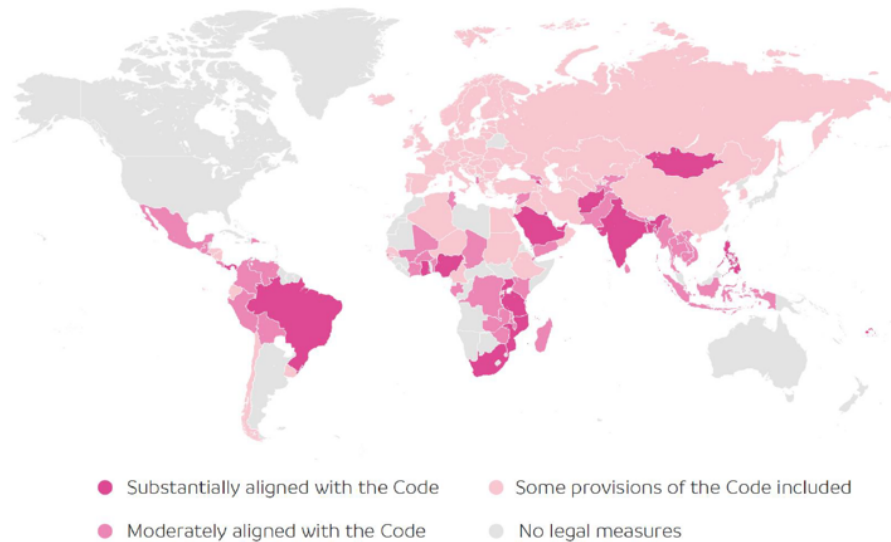


Public Policy, Breastfeeding & You

By: Hilary Lynn Johnston, LLLC Leader,

How do you feel about your breastfeeding experience? Were you supported to reach your breastfeeding goals? Did you get the breastfeeding or chestfeeding support you expected from your health professionals? You might be surprised to learn that while Canada approved¹ the 1981 **International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes**, we lag behind much of the world in creating laws to protect babies and parents from commercial interests which produce breastmilk substitutes, a.k.a. infant formula.



*Image credit: World Health Organization, Unicef & IBFAN's "Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes: national Implementation of the International Code – Status Report 2020 Launch event 28 May 2020"*²

¹ Breastfeeding Committee for Canada. (n.d.). International Code. Retrieved January 14, 2022, from <https://breastfeedingcanada.ca/en/baby-friendly-initiative/#international-code>

²Grummer-Strawn, L. (2020, May 24). Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes: National Implementation of the International Code - Status Report 2020 - Launch Event 28 May 2020. Slide 6. Retrieved January 12, 2022, from https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/breastfeeding/event/online-launch-2020-code-status-report/presentation-laurencegrummer-strawn-resultsandfindings.pdf?sfvrsn=ca9e21ae_2&fbclid=IwAR1qLy-YrH6ESO53W47_Abt0rKddH5tEvDhrccu2-YJw_RWf7QfrNb7vnQ4



According to La Leche League International, “The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes ... covers **marketing** and **promotion** of products meant to substitute for breastfeeding. It **does not ban** their sale or use; it simply restricts how they may be promoted and marketed in order to protect the health of infants and young children...”³

Canada’s slow progress towards implementing the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes means your healthcare provider may not have received the lactation education required to support you.

In 2021, to mark the 40th anniversary of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, the World Health Organization and Unicef shared infographics⁴ to make it easier for us to understand the effects of failure to implement the Code:



³ La Leche League International. (n.d.). *International WHO Code*. Retrieved January 12, 2022, from <https://www.llli.org/about/international-who-code/>

⁴ World Health Organization social media. Retrieved May 29, 2021.



Perhaps you experienced the effect of commercial influences on your breastfeeding journey. If so, you may wish to provide your birthing institution with feedback. Some parents send an email or a handwritten letter, while others have discovered a 'patient experience feedback form' on the website of the institution where they gave birth.

Your partner, another family member or a friend may be willing to write down your words while you feed your baby. They may also want to write a message of their own. You may find it satisfying to draft a short, simple message with an app and send your message through an online form or by email. Know that it's normal for emotions to run high - consider taking a break before re-reading, revising and finalizing your message. Remember that you are writing to actual human beings working in an institution that may be stretched beyond capacity. Therefore, adopting a respectful, even kind or collaborative, tone is recommended.

Remember, any feedback is better than no feedback, and positive feedback is helpful too! Please take a moment now to find the website of the institution where you gave birth, and find out how to submit feedback. Bookmark it so you can come back to it if you are interrupted. Sharing your experience will make a difference for the parents of the future!

If commercial interests reach you and your friends directly through internet advertising, social media, or the delivery of advertising and/or free samples to your own home, please read [The Code and You](#).

If you would like to learn more about change for the better where people give birth, please read [The Baby Friendly Initiative](#).