



Baby-Friendly Initiative Ontario

Celebrating — 25 YEARS —



Presentation prepared by:

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I have no financial disclosure or conflicts of
interest to report.



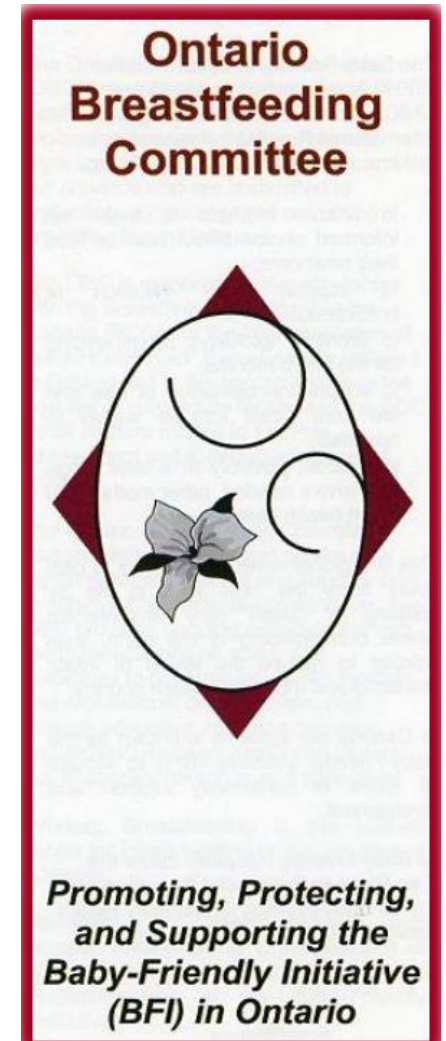
Presentation Objectives

- Discuss the inception of BFI Ontario
- Reflect on the highlights of BFI Ontario's journey over the past 25 years
- Review the current status of breastfeeding and the BFI in Ontario
- Begin to plan the next steps for moving BFI Ontario forward into the future



Ontario's BFI Journey

- Journey began with a stakeholder meeting in 2000
- Ontario Breastfeeding Committee (OBC) was formed
 - Vision and Mission
 - Hospital and CHS representation
 - BFI action plan



Provincial BFI Milestones

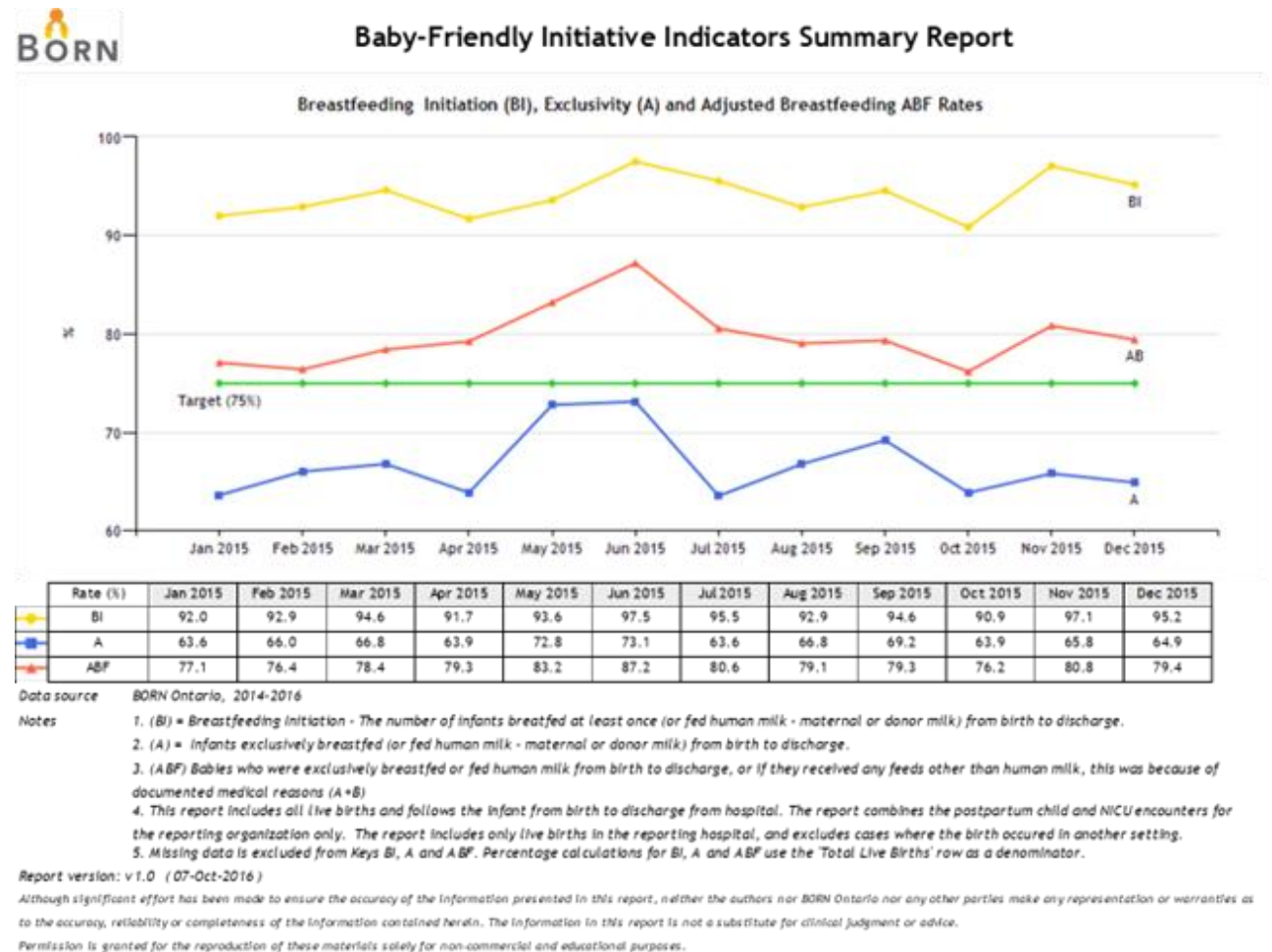
- **2003:** First hospital in Ontario became designated (second in Canada)
- **2006:** First CHS in Ontario became designated (second in Canada)
- **2009:** Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health (PCMCH) led an expert panel to provide cost-effective recommendations to support the delivery of breastfeeding supports and services with a focus on improving breastfeeding rates
- **2010:** Recommendations for a Provincial Breastfeeding Strategy for Ontario document released

- **2011:** A representative from the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport was appointed as an OBC member and attended the Breastfeeding Committee for Canada's (BCC) Provincial/Territorial (PT) committee meetings
- **2011:** BFI designation became an indicator to measure public health unit performance (Accountability Agreement)
- **2011:** Roger Hixon Ontario Human Milk Bank opened
- **2012:** OBC name was changed to Baby-Friendly Initiative Ontario (BFI Ontario) to be more clearly identified with BFI



Building Data Collection Systems – Hospital

- **2012:** Better Outcomes Registry and Network (BORN) collaborated with BFI Ontario and incorporated BCC definitions in hospital based data collection
- **2016:** Each hospital through the BORN portal has easy access to BFI reports including:
 - breastfeeding and supplementation rates for all infants from birth to discharge
 - comparison reports to other similar hospitals and all Ontario hospitals
 - summary report for easy sharing within organization



Building Data Collection Systems – Community

- **2013-2015:** Public Health Ontario Locally Driven Collaborative Project program developed a standardized tool and method for collecting infant feeding surveillance data by Ontario public health units

Infant Feeding Surveillance Knowledge Exchange Continuation Project

User Guide and Report on the Analytic Guidance for
the Prospective Multiple Time Point Questionnaires



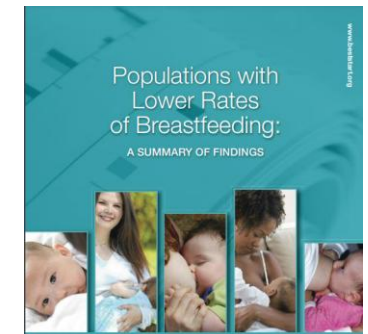
Government Supported Programs

- **2013: Healthy Kids Strategy** - Government initiative to promote children's health and reduce childhood obesity
 - Telehealth Ontario 24/7 Breastfeeding Support (2014)
 - Training, tools, guidance and resources to help Ontario hospitals and community health services achieve BFI designation
 - BFI Strategy for Ontario
 - Targeted, community-based supports for families with lower rates of breastfeeding – funded through Best Start



best start
meilleur départ

by/par health *nexus* santé



best start
meilleur départ

**BABY-FRIENDLY
INITIATIVE STRATEGY
ONTARIO**



Moving Towards Present Times

- **2017:** The inclusion of BFI designation in the accountability agreements no longer a requirement of the Ontario Public Health Standards
- **2019:** Launch of BCC's QI Collaborative Project – Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto and Halton Healthcare with Georgetown Hospital, Milton District Hospital and Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital were successful applicants from Ontario
- **2019:** BFI Strategy for Ontario and Best Start funding not renewed
- **2020:** Public Health Ontario releases a Q &A document supporting BFI implementation but not designation

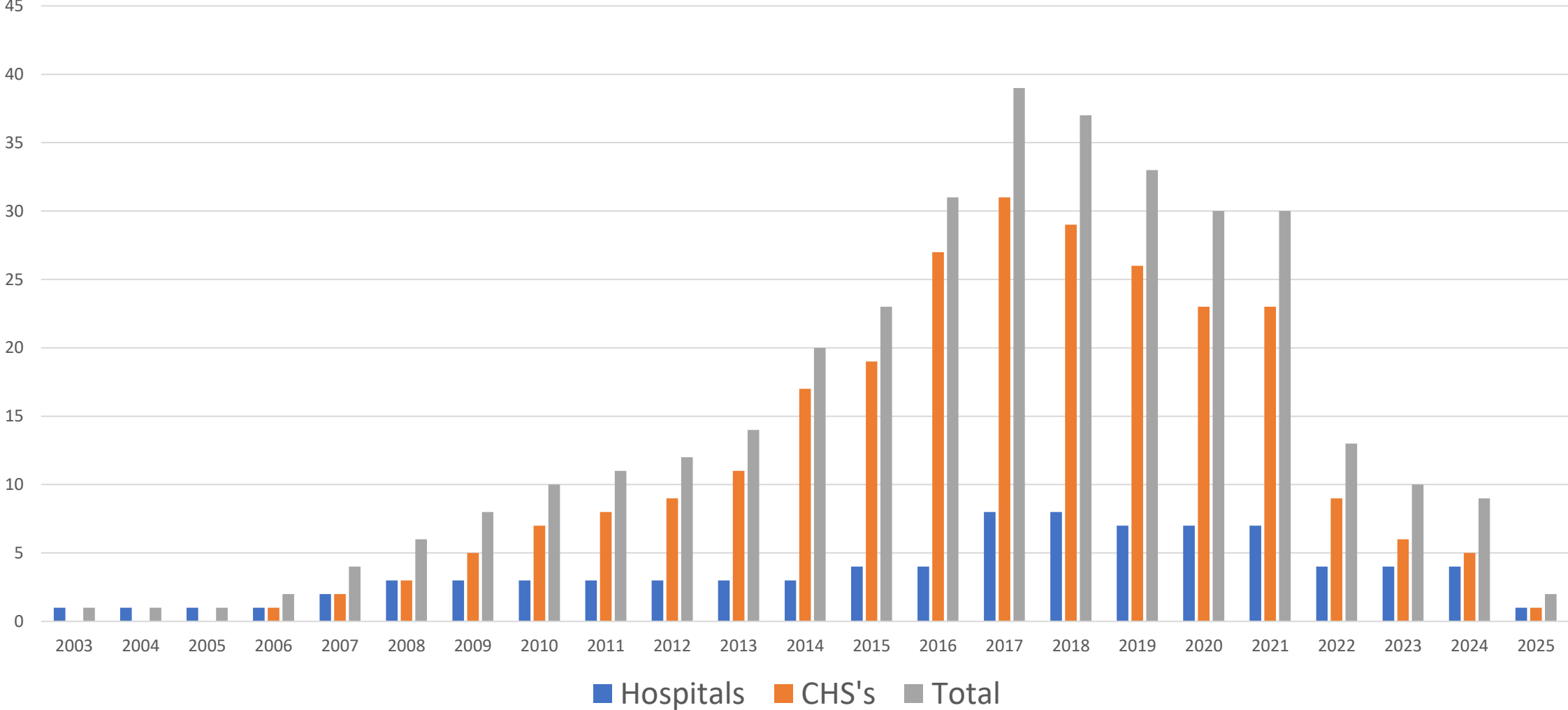
More Recently

- **2022:** Phase 2 of the BCC's BFI Collaborative Project: *Scaling up BFI in Canada*. Ontario had 6 hospitals and 2 community health services participating in the Coach-Mentor program
- **2022/2023:** Public Health Ontario redistributes the document “Q & A consideration for re-designating as Baby-Friendly” and BFION responds with letter to PHO, MOH's and briefing note to BFION members
- **2022 - 2024:** BFION membership recruitment workgroup created a plan and implemented strategies to build BFION membership
- **2024-2025:** BFION antenatal hand expression workgroup held awareness and think tank events – work continues

More Recently

- **2023:** Request sent to Ontario government requesting government representative for BFION (no government representation since 2018)
- **2023:** Resources developed by BFI Strategy for Ontario and Best Start are becoming outdated and many others are not accessible
- **2024:** BFION updates website to enable evidence-based resources related to the BFI to be readily accessible to the public
- **2024:** BCC completes pilot (QI collaborative project)and assessment process revised
- **2025:** BCC and University of Manitoba received Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) funding to support CHS's across Canada working towards BFI designation → 3 CHS's from Ontario are participating

BFI Designated Facilities in Ontario



BFI Designated Facilities in Ontario

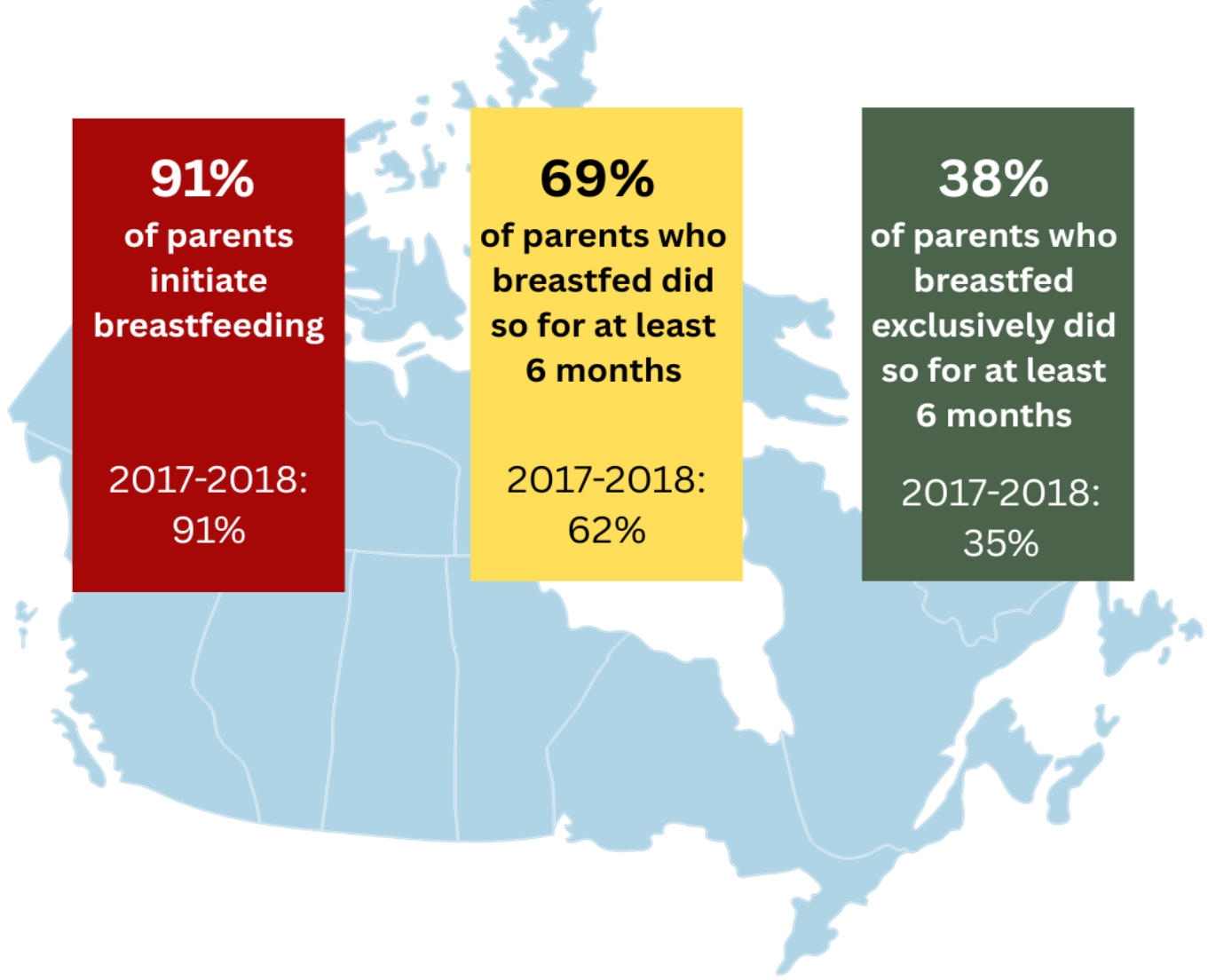
- Brightshores Health System (formerly Grey Bruce Health Services): Initial designation September 2015 and redesignation June 2024
- Carlington Community Health Centre: Initial designation December 2017 and redesignation May 2024

Facilities Achieving BFI Recognition in Ontario

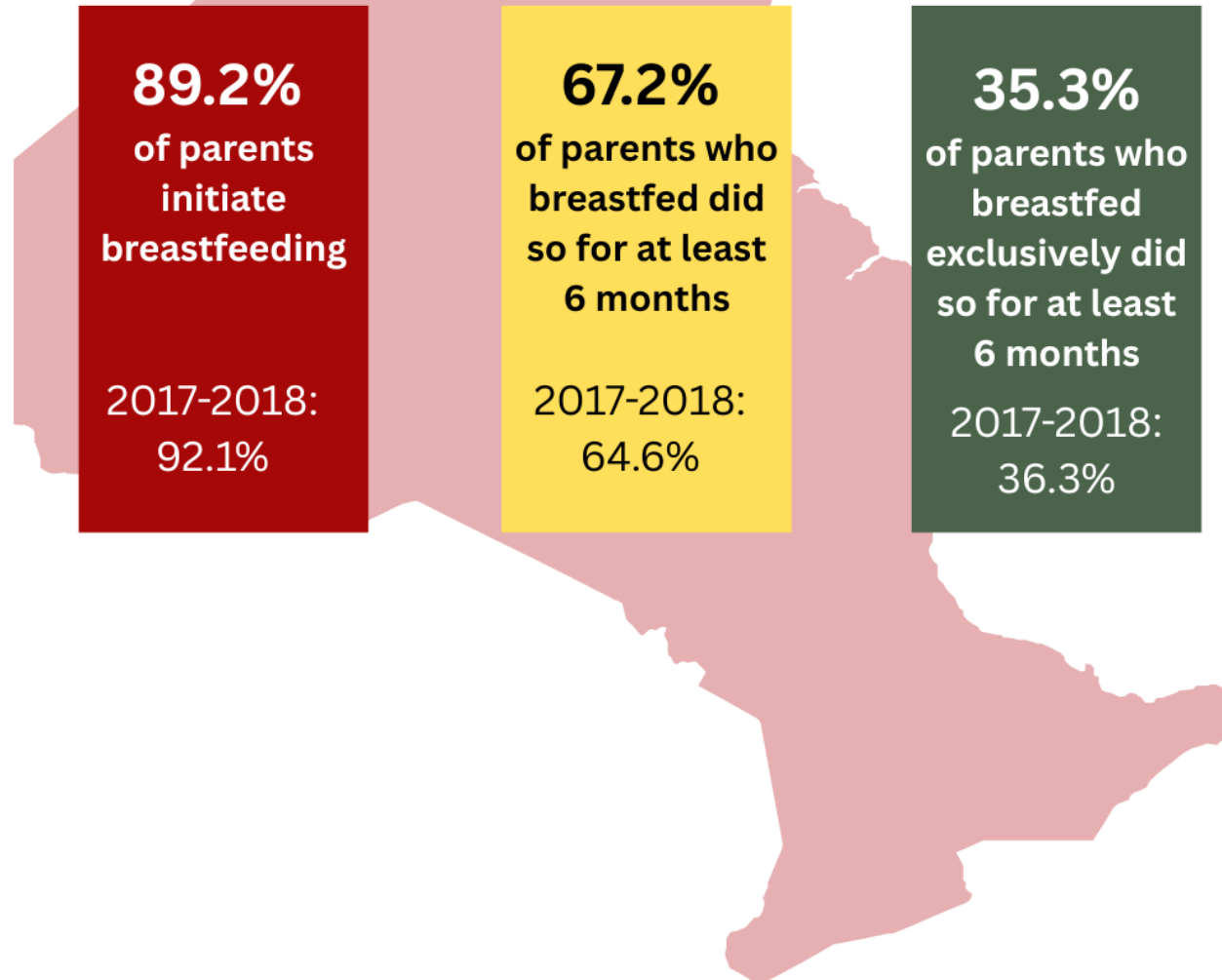
- Guelph General Hospital (silver)
- Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre (silver)
- Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre (silver)

Silver = Facility has met requirements of 6 to 8 of the 10 Steps

Canada's Breastfeeding Dashboard 2024



Ontario

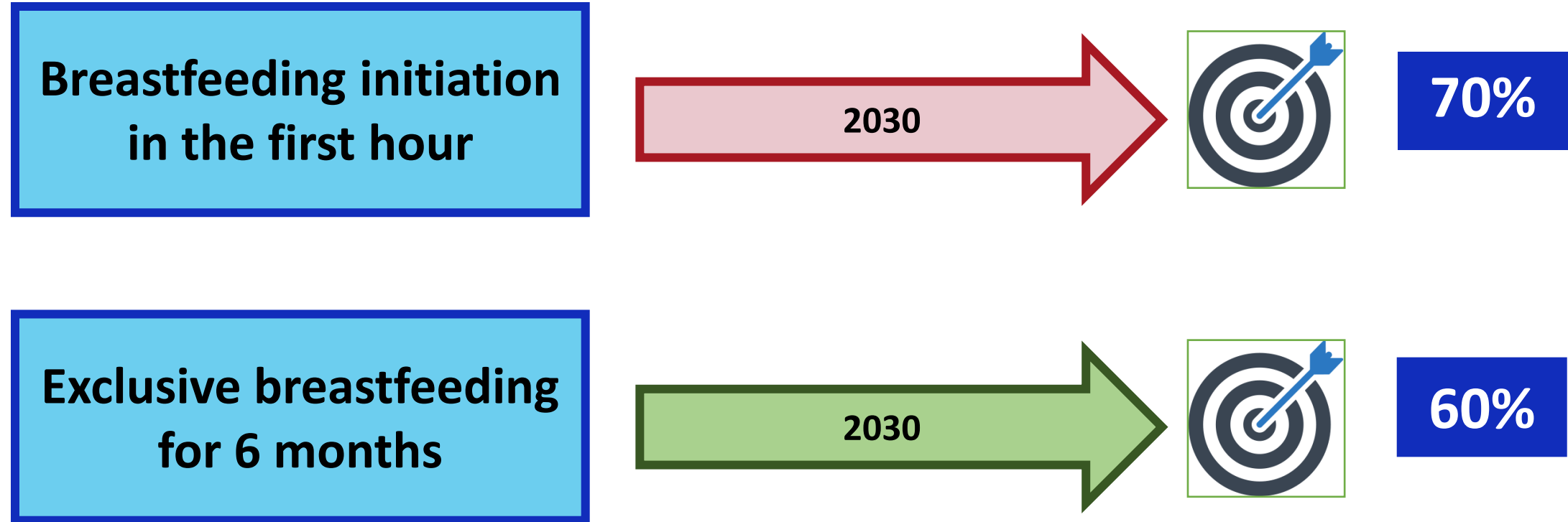


Summary



- Ontario's breastfeeding initiation rate has decreased by about 3% since 2017-2018
- Ontario's exclusive breastfeeding rate at 6 months has fallen about 1% since 2017-2018
- The rate of babies receiving some breastmilk at 6 months (any breastfeeding) has increased by approximately 3% since 2017-2018
- Ontario's breastfeeding initiation rate and rates of any and exclusive breastfeeding at 6 months are less than the rates for Canada as a whole

Global Breastfeeding Targets



Global Breastfeeding Targets

**Breastfeeding at one
year**

2030



80%

**Breastfeeding at two
years**

2030



60%

Decline in BFI Designated Facilities in Ontario

Possible Factors



- Lack of provincial government involvement with BFION since 2020
- BFI Strategy for Ontario (a provincial government initiative) ended in 2019
- PHO encouragement for health units to implement BFI but not become BFI designated
- Pandemic and impact on hospitals and community health services – staffing, service provision, competing priorities etc.

Healthcare Cost Savings

- Research shows that the BFI improves breastfeeding rates and improved breastfeeding rates result in significant healthcare cost savings
- Example: Ontario study showed that about 73 million dollars US would be saved if Ontario improved the exclusive breastfeeding rate at 6 months to 65%

Open Access

(<https://internationalbreastfeedingjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13006-025-00702-y>)



National BFI Supported Work

- The Breastfeeding Committee of Canada received PHAC funding for the National Baby-Friendly Quality Improvement Collaborative Project with 25 hospitals from across all of Canada in 2019
 - **4 hospitals from Ontario involved in Phase 1 of BFI Project**
- A BFI Coach Mentor Program was launched in April 2022 and open to Hospitals and Community Health Services
 - **6 facilities from Ontario were involved in BCC Coach Mentor Program**
- In 2025 the BCC and University of Manitoba received Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) funding to support Community Health Services (CHS) across Canada working towards BFI designation
 - **3 CHS's in Ontario participating in the Community Baby-Friendly Initiative Collaborative (CBFI-C)**

Provincial Government Support Could Help ...

- Collaborate with BFI Ontario, join membership meetings and BCC Provincial/Territorial committee meetings
- Support updating of provincial breastfeeding/infant feeding resources
- Help revive Breastfeeding Resources Ontario (Breastfeeding/BFI Clearinghouse of resources)
- 24/7 Breastfeeding Help Line – review staff education and protocols used to address concerns



- [Bilingual Online Ontario Breastfeeding Services](#) (BOOBS) – update website
- [Health 811 site](#) – breastfeeding information non-informative or links broken
- Public Health Units - Mandatory reporting of exclusive and any breastfeeding rate at: Entry to service, 2 months, 6 months, 12 months & 24 months
- Better Outcomes Registry & Network (BORN) reports of hospital breastfeeding data could be shared with public

Going Forward...

- Antenatal hand expression workgroup (BFION)
- 3 CHS's from Ontario are participating in the community BFI collaborative (CBFI-C)
- World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTi) (BCC) → Infant feeding data collection
- 25th anniversary virtual event (BFION)



Baby-Friendly Initiative Ontario

By working together we can improve breastfeeding rates, improve the health of babies and families in Ontario and save healthcare dollars!



Baby-Friendly Initiative Ontario

Reflecting on the past 25 years



Baby-Friendly Initiative Ontario

to guide us into the future

*Thank
you*