



Gander Social Benefit Report 2025-2026

Building differently



A message from the Founder & CEO

This is Gander's first Benefit Report.

It covers our first fiscal year, though in reality that was closer to nine months with a fully funded team building Gander full-time.

This report is about the things we care about most... and happen to be the hardest to measure: trust, dignity, healthier conversations, stronger communities, and digital sovereignty.

Sadly, they don't all fit neatly into a dashboard. At least, not yet.

A message from the Founder & CEO

From the beginning, our goal has been to build social media that's genuinely fun to use... and worthy of people's trust.

It's oh so easy to say, and SO much harder to build.

Throughout this report you'll see the choices that goal required: standing up sovereign Canadian infrastructure, limiting data collection, designing moderation rooted in Canadian law, and building *with* our community, not just *for* it.

Most of those decisions took more time, more effort, and more resources than they otherwise might have.

Every single one was worth it.

None of this happened alone. From our earliest planning sessions, to the 2,517 Canadians who invested in Gander, to the nearly 7,000 beta testers who helped shape the platform, this has always been a community effort.

Moving forward, we'll keep improving the platform, refining our policies, and finding better ways to measure whether we're living up to our commitments. This report is simply a snapshot of our first year: what we've built, what we've learned, and where we're headed next.

Thank you for being part of it.

Ben Waldman

Founder & CEO

On behalf of the Gander team

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About this report

What on earth is a Benefit Company?

Benefit companies are a pretty new concept that not everyone is familiar with (yet, hopefully we see more of them). So let's start at the start.

A benefit company is a for-profit business that legally commits to operating in a responsible and sustainable way, while also creating a clear public benefit.

The idea is that we're here to serve something more than just maximizing profits for shareholders. Since we all know how that one so often goes.

Different versions of benefit companies can be found in: Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, Rwanda, Italy, France, a bunch of U.S. states and across the pond in the UK.

In Canada, British Columbia is the only province that offers a formal benefit company structure.

That's where Gander is incorporated.

In practice it means that we're expected to build a real business and to do it in a responsible way that contributes positively to society. A tall order for sure, but a worthwhile one.

About this report → What on earth is a Benefit Company?

The benefit part has to show up in how we build Gander as a product: who it serves, how it treats people, and what kind of environment it creates online. The behind the scenes stuff is just as important: decisions about data, ownership, operations, governance and infrastructure too.

In other words, the idea behind Gander: **a more human, more accountable kind of social platform... isn't just a philosophy.**

It's how we operate.

Then there's reporting

We all love reading reports... right?

Usually, they're crammed full dense data tables, are written in the passive voice, and at their worst are designed to obfuscate instead of providing clarity. All stuffed into a duotang that's thicker than The Canadian Oxford Dictionary.

Not really our jam, though we are keen on dictionaries, duotangs, evidence and citing sources.

About this report → Then there's reporting

For us, this is a starting point. It's the very first snapshot of our progress against Benefit Statement (more on that in a bit). Our hope is that each time we add to the montage a fuller picture comes into relief.

The purpose of this report is pretty straightforward: **to share our progress toward our Benefit Statement, the impact we see it having, and when/where we are still figuring stuff out.** There's a lot of that last bit.

It's also a way to hold ourselves accountable early... before we come up with a fancy measurement framework, or polished reporting template.

We're still figuring out how to track and explain impact in a way that's useful and honest. That will improve over time.

For now, we're focusing on being clear about what we're doing, why we're doing it, and what we're seeing so far.

Most of this first report covers laying the groundwork:

- **the platform itself**
- **the infrastructure behind it**
- **and the principles guiding both**

These are all early decisions that will have a long lasting influence on what Gander becomes. They needed to be sturdy, reliable, and up to code.

Building foundations... differently

Platform

We built a platform centred on dignity, limited data collection, and meaningful interaction.

Infrastructure

We established a sovereign technology stack hosted in Canada, under Canadian jurisdiction.

Trust & Safety

We developed moderation policies and tools grounded in Canadian law and Charter principles

Community

We welcomed more than 7K beta testers and nearly 31K members to help shape a safer social platform.

And we're just getting started.

Our benefit statement

To build trustworthy social infrastructure that protects user dignity, advances digital sovereignty, and strengthens democratic participation in the digital public sphere (the “Benefit”).

In pursuing this Benefit, the Company will conduct its business in a responsible, transparent, privacy-respecting and community-guided manner. The Company is also committed to Canadian stewardship, governance and ownership to ensure long-term accountability to the public interest.

Our benefit statement

What it means in practice

We're building a platform designed to:

- **maintain Canadian-ownership, stewardship, and accountability**
- **provide value to people, not extract it from them**
- **support healthier, democratic participation online**

In simple terms, we are choosing conversation over consumption, and community over clout.

Live prototype input session →

Gander Creator Jam Session at Toronto Tech Week, 2025



Delivering on our benefit

This section looks at how we're putting our public benefit into practice. It tracks what we did, the evidence we collected and what the impact was.

With time, this section of the report will include additional data points, as we collect them and put more systems into service of the Gander community.

1. Protecting user dignity

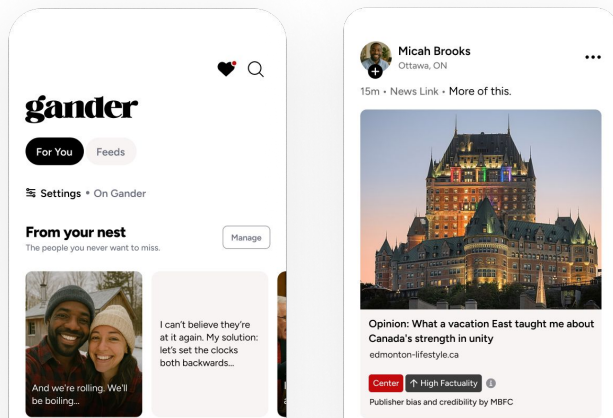
Gander is a space meant to support real relationships, not chase performance metrics at the expense of both communities and individuals. Treating people as a product isn't all that dignified. Instead, we designed a space for real people to connect in real ways while collecting as little personal data as possible.

Delivering on our benefit → Protecting user dignity

What we did

- **Designed and implemented “Nests”,** small, user-defined groups that prioritize close connections (e.g. family, friends, shared interests) and encourage more intentional, pro-social interaction
- **Established a minimum-personal-data product design principle:** all features begin with the question of the minimum data required, with a default assumption of collecting no data unless strictly necessary
- **Created a straightforward and uncomplicated process for downloading data and deleting accounts**
- **Designed data-limiting identity verification** using Canada Post’s on-device verification system and institutional email options, ensuring we never receive sensitive identity data
- **Implemented news publisher reputation labeling:** most links to news on Gander include labels to inform users of a publisher’s bias and fact-checking record.

Nests, and Publisher Reputation Labels on Gander →



Delivering on our benefit → Protecting user dignity

Evidence

- Nests encourage meaningful interaction over passive consumption
- Canada Post and Institutional Email verification integration architectures prevent centralized storage of identity data
- News publisher reputation labeling display publisher bias and fact-checking records on almost all news links
- Product design processes consistently apply data minimization principles

Impact

- Platform design reduces exposure to common harms associated with large-scale social media (e.g. harassment, performative pressures, engagement-driven toxicity, and the blind spread of misinformation)
- Users retain greater control over identity, privacy, and set their own social boundaries
- Reduced data collection lowers risk of breaches and misuse

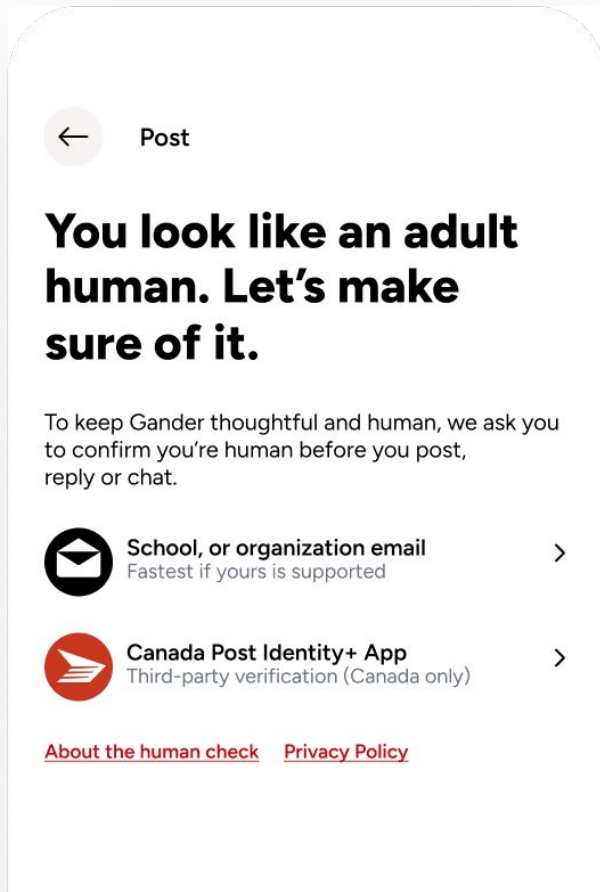
Delivering on our benefit → Protecting user dignity

What we're still figuring out

Using prosocial research and methodologies to implement quality scoring to judge how trustworthy a behaviour, intervention, evidence, or piece of content is, i.e., whether engagement on content posted to Gander is actually helpful, empathetic, constructive, and beneficial to the community.

Ensuring verification for all

We're also exploring how to make verification more accessible to those who may not have access to government ID or institutional email →



2. Advancing digital

sovereignty

One of our earliest decisions was to build and keep Gander's core systems and infrastructure in Canada under Canadian stewardship and law. Much like broadband, telephone lines, and the postal system that came before us, we see social media as critical communications infrastructure. It's where we get our news, organize, and connect with each other.

Ultimately, this is about ensuring that the ways we communicate and the data we create doing it, stays subject to Canadian laws, regulations, and jurisdictions.

What we did

- **Hosted all core application infrastructure within Canada using sovereign providers** (OVH Canada and ThinkOn)
- **Ensured that all user-facing systems and data are sovereign** and governed within Canadian jurisdiction
- **Prioritized Canadian companies**, providers for services wherever possible
- **Segmented corporate tooling from core product** infrastructure to maintain sovereignty over user data



Delivering on our benefit → Advancing digital sovereignty

Evidence

- 100% of application data hosted within Canadian infrastructure, outside of U.S. jurisdiction
- Clear separation between sovereign product systems and non-sovereign corporate tools

Impact

- Maintains Canadian control over user data and platform operations
- Reduces exposure to foreign jurisdictional access and control risks

- Reduces exposure to foreign actors and misinformation risks
- Supports broader national digital sovereignty objectives

What we're still figuring out

There are major gaps (chasms even) in the Canadian technology landscape—especially sovereign tech. In many cases, there simply aren't Canadian offerings for the services and tooling Canadian companies need to run effectively. We're always striving to build our network and find other good folks making good things.

3. Strengthening democratic participation

Gander is designed to facilitate participation and to support constructive, civil dialogue. Both are essential facets of a healthy democracy and critical for meeting our commitments as a benefit company.



What we did

- **Designed platform architecture to support smaller, community-driven interaction models** rather than favouring algorithms that amplify extreme positions and polarization
- **Initiated plans for pilot programs with content creators and organizations** to seed constructive, public-interest content
- **Established Charter-aligned moderation policies/community guidelines** further informed by Canadians' journalistic codes of ethics and Canadian human rights frameworks

← **Community guidelines discussion**

Gander Creator Jam Session at Toronto Tech Week, 2025

Delivering on our benefit → Strengthening democratic participation

- **Worked with Canadian legal advisors** with experience in complex regulatory environments, to design and implement our moderation framework
- **Prioritized product features that encourage active participation** over passive consumption
- **Removed public “like” counts**, favouring comments/conversation instead



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We grounded this work in established Canadian frameworks and norms, including:

- The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Canadian Association of Journalists Ethics Guidelines and CWA Canada Media Union Code (i.e. if/when/how to display graphic imagery)
- Research and publications from the Canadian Human Rights Commission
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action
- Academic and ethical standards from Canadian universities

Delivering on our benefit → Strengthening democratic participation

Evidence

- More than 7,000 beta testers helped shape the platform during early development, with invitations sent to the full Early Access Program.
- Moderation framework aligned with Canadian legal and ethical principles
- Moderation tools developed in concert with policy design
- Planned pilot engagement with institutional and creator partners (Gander Studio, CIRA, work with Canadian unions)

Impact

- Platform structure supports healthier discourse and participation
- Familiar and proven guardrails in place
- Early adoption signals demand for alternatives to existing engagement-driven platforms

What we're still figuring out

Ways to report on moderation activities that preserve privacy while also providing transparency into our decision making process... and that don't open up avenues for bad actors to exploit the systems in place.

4. Responsible, transparent, and community-guided approach

For us, part of building a healthier social platform means building it hand-in-hand with the community that's using it to share their stories and build connections.

In practice, that has meant involving people early, listening closely, and being transparent about how we make decisions and improve the platform over time. The responsible part is about collecting as little data about people as we can while we do... especially when it relates to feedback on the platform where operationally it's often useful to collect a bit more than the most basic information about people (it's always opt-in though, and never mandatory).

What we did

- **Ran co-design and feedback sessions** during prototype development
- **Worked with a large beta testing group selected to reflect a broad cross-section of people** across Canada (age, geo, tech comfort... all opt-in)
- **Engaged with nearly 7,000 beta testers** who helped shape the platform through testing, feedback, bug reporting, and feature suggestions between January to mid-May 2026

Delivering on our benefit → Strengthening democratic participation

- **Deployed twelve releases Jan-July 2026 to implement feedback**, improve the app, and stabilize the core feature set
- **Developed moderation policies** with external support
- **Built and deployed sovereign moderation** systems
- **Shared regular updates with the community** throughout development and early access
- **Invited the full 47,000 people in the Early Access Program** to join Gander by the time of publication

Evidence

- Moderation policy framework completed
- Sovereign moderation tooling in place
- Ongoing feedback through support, beta testing, and community channels
- Thousands of pieces of beta feedback reviewed and incorporated into product decisions throughout development
- Beta phase complete, product stabilized, Early Access Program onboarded

Delivering on our benefit → Strengthening democratic participation

Impact

- Product direction shaped by community input
- Greater transparency and accountability in how decisions are made
- Moderation grounded in democratic legal principles
- Development informed by a wide range of experiences and perspectives across Canada
- Community driven technology model established

What we're still figuring out

- What an ongoing community feedback process looks like as Gander moves beyond rapid beta development and the core platform stabilizes
- How to manage feature beta releases as the number of people using Gander continues to grow

Open discussion →

Gander Creator Jam Session at Toronto Tech Week, 2025



5. Governance

Decision making is currently led by the founders with input from staff, advisors, and the community on Gander.

As a Canadian-owned and Canadian-operated company, we always consider our public benefit alongside business needs when making decisions.

That includes balancing growth, speed, safety, sustainability, and the long-term stewardship of the Gander Social Inc.

Our public benefit commits us to building trustworthy social infrastructure in a responsible, transparent, privacy-respecting, and community-guided manner. While many of our governance practices are still developing, these principles guide how we

approach major decisions across the company.

This includes maintaining Canadian stewardship of the platform, prioritizing sustainable growth over rapid expansion (beta testing and staged onboarding), and considering the impact of decisions not only on the business, but on the people and communities we serve (removing public like counts).

As we grow, we intend to strengthen our governance processes and reporting so that accountability grows and matures alongside the platform and the community on it.

Standards and frameworks

As a young company, we are still developing formal approaches to measuring and reporting impact. And ones that eschew the traditional growth and vanity metrics that have enshittified so much of our online experience.

We have however looked to established frameworks to help guide our thinking and decision-making.

At present, Gander is broadly aligned with:

- **B Lab's B Impact Assessment principles**
- **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 9, 10, and 16**

These frameworks provide useful reference points for areas such as governance, accountability, inclusion, democratic participation, and institution-building.

More formal alignment will take time. While our immediate goal isn't B-Corp certification, we do want to make sure that we leave that door open for ourselves. By building with these principles in mind from the start, we hope to create a stronger foundation for future accountability and reporting.

The Gander leadership team

Jen, Jeff, Stirling, and Ben



6. People & operations

We are a remote-first team made up of full-time staff and part-time contributors.

Many technology companies operate with an expectation that people are always available. We do not believe that is healthy, sustainable, or necessary. People need time away from social media, moderation queues, support requests, and development work.

As a result, we are designing our operations around scheduled coverage, clear expectations, and realistic workloads. While some roles occasionally require on-call availability, we do not want an "always on" culture to become part of how Gander operates. If we don't want people on Gander to be always online (it's not designed to be addictive) then we need to reflect that behaviour internally.

This takes planning, especially as a small team. It means managing service standards carefully and being honest about what we can support at each stage of growth.

Speaking of...

7. Responsible growth

It's our perspective that growth should be nurtured, not hacked. And Gander needs to grow. But not at the expense of Democracy, our team, and the wellbeing of people logging on to Gander.

Instead, we focused on understanding how people use the platform, their needs, what kinds of communities are forming, and whether the foundations we are building are working as intended.

(Spoiler: so far, they are)

We also chose to design and experiment with values-aligned monetization during this early period. Before introducing revenue-generating features, we needed to understand how they might affect the experience people are enjoying on Gander.

As we continue to grow, our goal is to do so sustainably. That means continuously evaluating business models to ensure they align with our values, respect people's attention and privacy, and support long-term viability.

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Challenges and trade-offs

Building a social network differently comes with its fair share of challenges.

Many of the goals outlined in our public benefit statement require trade-offs that traditional businesses don't need to make. Building trustworthy social infrastructure, advancing digital sovereignty, and operating in a responsible and accountable way usually means taking the longer path.

Some of the most significant challenges during our first year included:

- **Balancing speed of development with thoughtful trust, safety, privacy, and governance design** so that we don't expose people to harm
- **Operating within the resource constraints of an early-stage company**
- **Maintaining Canadian sovereignty goals** while still relying on some external tools and services
- **Determining where to draw lines between openness, safety, privacy, and accountability**

Challenges and trade-offs

One challenge stood above most others: building Gander on Canadian sovereign infrastructure.

Most social platforms are built using centralized infrastructure, services, and tools that can be purchased off the shelf. Hosting, media processing, email delivery, moderation systems, support tooling, identity verification, and other core services are often provided by large multinational technology companies and operate under foreign legal jurisdictions.

Because Gander is committed to Canadian data sovereignty, many of those shortcuts were not available to us.

Instead, we chose to build and operate on infrastructure hosted in Canada, governed by Canadian law. This required additional engineering effort, custom technical solutions, and significant problem-solving across multiple parts of the platform.

The same was true for moderation. Rather than adopting existing approaches developed elsewhere, we worked to build policies and systems grounded in Canadian legal principles, rights frameworks, and democratic values.

These decisions increased both the complexity and cost of development. They also slowed some aspects of implementation, like onboarding. We couldn't justify growth without having safeguards in place. So we put the safeguards in place first.

Challenges and trade-offs

In retrospect, this was absolutely the right approach for us.

Today, Gander's platform infrastructure and data storage are hosted in Canada outside of U.S. legal jurisdiction. The experience of building these systems has also created technical knowledge and expertise that will continue to inform our work as the network and community grow.

In some cases, moving more slowly has meant building stronger foundations. In others, resource limitations have required us to make practical choices while continuing to work toward longer-term goals.

We expect these tensions to remain part of our work as the Gander grows.

Reflections

This first year was more about direction than scale.

Even at this early stage, a few things are already clear:

- **Community shapes the platform as much as product decisions.** Many of our best improvements came directly from early members and beta testers.
- **Building differently takes more work.** Choosing trust, accountability, and Canadian stewardship very often means choosing principles over convenience.

- **We are also still defining what success looks like.** Traditional technology metrics focus on growth, engagement, and time spent. While those measures have their place, they don't fully capture the outcomes we're working toward.

Protecting user dignity, advancing digital sovereignty, strengthening democratic participation, and building trust are much harder to measure. They also happen to be the things we care about most.

Toward year two

As we move into our second year, our focus remains on strengthening the foundations we have already begun to build.

As the platform grows, we intend to improve how we report on our public benefit commitments and the outcomes associated with them.

We expect future reports to become more detailed, measurable, and comprehensive over time.

Key priorities include:

- Additional privacy-protecting human verification, with a deeper focus on **accessibility**
- Expansion of **moderation** operations and tooling
- Development of clearer, measurable **impact and accountability metrics**
- Continued investment in **Canadian-hosted infrastructure** and sovereign systems
- Ongoing **community input** programs, particularly as it relates to accessibility

In closing

This is the earliest of our early Benefit reporting.

It reflects a company that is still growing, still learning, and still figuring some things out. Well, a lot of things really. And in truth, we hope that never changes. As long as we're around Gander will forever remain a work in progress.

There are areas where we have made meaningful progress. There are others where we are only beginning the work.

For now, the plan is to report **openly, remain accountable to our commitments, and continue improving.**

Thank you to the thousands of people who have joined Gander, invested, tested early versions of the platform, shared feedback, reported bugs, challenged assumptions, and helped define Gander the platform and Gander the community.

And to you as well, dear reader for making it to the end of this report. It's why we publish it afterall.

Gander is better because you're here, paying attention, sharing feedback, and holding us accountable.

We're looking forward to the year ahead with you.

The one after that too.

- The Team at Gander

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Thanks for reading.

We welcome your questions, feedback, and ideas
as we continue building Gander.

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