

INNOVATION UNDER THE MIDNIGHT SUN: REFLECTIONS FROM ICRPS2019 IN LAPLAND

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You know Dasher and Dancer and Prancer and Vixen,
But did you know that they *eat* reindeer in Finland?
So Santa Claus's crew might want to make themselves scarce,
But innovation nerds are going to want to hear about what I learned there.

Lapland has become one of Europe's model regions
In innovative cluster development – and for good reason.
'Arctic Smartness' is based on making bold new choices
To create a shared playbook, written by local voices.

Balancing unique local features and community needs
With globalization pressures is not something done with ease.
But for this remote northern region to thrive in the future
They've realized they need an ecosystem for Arctic entrepreneurs.

In the heat of the summer, the sun shines for 24 hours,
So natural product developers go out hunting for flowers
To make healing balms from nettle plants and spruce trees
That promote good skin health and keep wounds clean.

Midnight sunshine in the summer and winter's Northern Lights
Bring in a billion tourism dollars from visitor delights.
Tourism's tricky, as Finland's figured out
So they're focusing on safety and collaboration to address sustainability doubts.

Pursuing ways to reduce waste and promote collaborative planning
Is building a circular economy that keeps Lapland advancing
In geo-technology, mining, energy and metal,
To protect sensitive ecosystems and attract investment capital.

All of this requires strategic investment
In research, development, and ongoing assessment.
More than 750 experts are working together
Across disciplines, communities, and industries to make Lapland's future better.

These initiatives are great, but not enough on their own.
Like rural Canada, the Arctic faces barriers that must be overcome.
So they're working with their neighbours to address challenges in the long-term
And make place-based investment and planning the new Arctic norm.

What can Canada learn from our Finnish friends?
How might we develop our own 'Maple Smartness' lens?
To lean on Gord Downey, when we look to the Arctic circle,
It's clear we have one shot, no dress rehearsal.

Lapland is focusing on its own special thing,
Keeping its eyes wide open and focused on the brass ring
Of innovation designed to match today's changing world
While using keen foresight that will allow the future to unfurl.

We need policy wonks and techies to both come to the table,
With scientists, businesses, and artists all doing what they're able
To find ways to waste less and do more for the planet –
In Lapland they know we can't take our climate's future for granted.

Education is critical for getting us there
If we want to be 'above ordinary' we're going to have to prove that we care
About more than just start-ups, but about people's wellbeing
And if our 'Innovation Agenda' is just for big cities, our success will be fleeting.

We've got to get serious about what the future looks like at the community scale
And re-frame our thinking so that if we don't all succeed, it's a fail
To find the right balance between the global and local
Folks just like you are going to have to get vocal

Events just like this are a really great start
But you've got to leave here tomorrow with more than just good feels in your heart
Promise me that you're going to do three new things when you leave
Something easy, something challenging, and one that feels impossible to achieve

It's time to ask better questions about why we're not working together
To build circular social economies where everyone ends up better
Because if we've learned one thing from Finland, it's probably this:
We've got to lean into what makes us special and then follow our bliss

So while Arctic trails may have their secret tales,
And there's been poetry about poor Sam McGee,
Cool things are done under the midnight sun,
Making Finland a leader with lessons for everyone.

(Except maybe Rudolph)