Li Read at Sea to Sky Premier Properties (Salt Spring)

Spring, 2020.

Are we in the "After" yet?

The "Before" and the "After"...who knew!

On March 12th, a dramatic shift occurred. The provincial government requested closures of all non-essential businesses, schools were closed, the province's population was asked to stay home, &, when out (for essential reasons), to practice social distancing. The reason: to flatten the curve of the covid-19 virus' rapid spread. On Salt Spring, grocery stores, pharmacies, self-serve gas, liquor store & building supply store remain open, but with less hours & strict control over numbers in the stores, at any one time. Social distancing is a must. Only restaurants that can provide take-out are open. Initially, it was not requested that one would wear a mask, but now this is encouraged. The explanation: it may stop those infected, who don't show symptoms, from spreading via droplets. Hmmm.... Keep washing your hands, & wiping door knobs, surfaces, with disinfectant. B.C. Ferries cancelled major routes & also reduced sailings on other routes. Essential travel only is requested. People are encouraged to stay home & not to visit recreational communities such as the Gulf Islands, or Tofino/Uclulet, or Parksville/Qualicum, or the Sunshine Coast. Even if one owns a second recreational home in these areas, one is asked not to visit it. Accommodations are closed, annual events (Saturday Market, Art-Craft, Canada Day, ArtSpring) have been cancelled. To communicate/have meetings, groups are using Zoom for online connections. This is not yet the "After".

Spring/Summer invites one to enjoy ....

Post March 12th

Saturday Market cancelled

Restaurants closed unless can do take-out

Accommodations closed

Non-essential businesses closed

Ferries reduced sailings or cancelled routes

Events cancelled

Stay-at-home edict in place

Plus:

- Secondary home/ recreational regions request no travels to these small areas, not even for those who own cottages/second homes in these areas.
- Different groups (EDC, CRD, TRUST, MLA, MP, Agricultural Alliance, Salt Spring Community Services, Parks, Chamber, Tourism Partnership, etc) are regularly meeting via online ZOOM platform. Purpose: what can be done "now" to help & what in the "After"?

Will there be a renewed real estate market?

There will always be buying & selling of real estate, no matter the trend in place at any one time. Thin inventory is a characteristic of the coastal real estate markets, including on Salt Spring Island. The sales to date had their beginnings well before March 12th. Inquiries have gone up, as people searching for real estate may be treating the MLS & other websites as "entertainment". There is a serendipity/discovery thing that can happen during this, though...stuck at home, with time to indulge a search, one can discover new places. In the aftermath of this pandemic virus, we may see people deciding to seek out softer, gentler places, where they can garden, be more self-sufficient, & continue to work from home. Online marketing is now key for real estate.

Stay at Home...Social Distancing...not a choice.

The B.C. provincial government & the Canadian federal government have both insisted on the population staying at home, & practicing social distancing when having to go out. Businesses are closed. People are out of work. Massive government funding (both federal & provincial) is underway to help people who have lost jobs, are unable to pay rent, may lose businesses, etc. This began on March 12th, & is expected to remain in place at least until the middle of May. It may continue beyond that. Any soft openings allowing people to return to work or to school will still emphasize social distancing, wearing of masks, and so forth. Projections seem to think this may be part of our daily lives for 18 months to 2 years, or even until a vaccine is ready (two years?). For some people, already able to work online, it is not such a shift to be working from home. For others, it's definitely not an easy segue. Some businesses may not be able to reopen. And, what about all the money being paid to allow people to cope with job losses? The governments collect monies from taxes. That means from you.

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever"... (John Keats)

Going forward, what does the "After" look like?

This might just be the "Middle" right now...the "After" still to come.

In a crisis, for the first three weeks, people rush forward...it is the helping nature of humans. Then, it sinks in that this is something different, there is no immediate going back to "what was", & there is little that people can do in such a country-wide epidemic. Is that when societal unrest appears? Do mental health issues come to the fore? Is family violence on the increase? What about theft? With no clear idea as to how long this complete shut-down will last, & with no way to offset the outcomes of the epidemic, people do become fearful. In an area such as the Gulf Islands, or Vancouver Island, with natural beauty around us, it is important to remember to pay attention to our "surround sound"...that's the beauty of Spring that is all around us. Although many parks are closed, as social distancing is not possible there, some places remain open to us...time to watch a sunset from your favourite beach. Since we suddenly have time, let's take it. Always wanted to learn Spanish? Maybe create a family recipe cookbook? Do it!

"A poor life this, if full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare."
(W.H. Davies)

Any projections out there? Will virtual reality replace the real thing?

The difficulty in this middle period, between the clear memory of the "Before" & the unknown of the "After", we have no script to follow. No one knows when the restrictions will be lifted. New aspects of the virus seem to daily come forward. One thing that is clear: even for people not really into internet communication, they are being forced to get there. At the moment, locally, the ZOOM platform is being used for various Gulf Islands groups to meet up, to try to find pathways forward to an "After" time. Online communication is not the same as face to face interactions. We are social animals, as Aristotle reminded us several centuries ago. Meantime, better to phone or video in, to work with the various groups in your region, & to seek outcomes going forward. On Salt Spring?

Dining al fresco...always fun!

Check in with the Chamber of Commerce website for updates on what's what, who's doing what, & see if you can help out.

Societal change...and what might that look like?

During the "stay at home" edict, streaming video, live music streaming, online communication platforms, all came to the fore. Being at home, home schooling, finding education programs online, working from home, touching base with friends online...these are going to have profound outcomes. Rather than take a cruise or a plane, people may just decide to watch online virtual reality sites...discover museums, cultures, languages online. Food can be delivered to your door. Last year we may have smiled at drones delivering Amazon to your doorstep, but seems mainstream, now. Significant change is always noted for delivering the unexpected. We may all be surprised at the terrain of the true "After". In past crisis times (check your history), things after the specific crisis event saw an introduction of new ways to be. This one will be no exception. Right now, ZOOM & Skype seem to be the go to platforms, but easier versions will soon be here. Will virtual reality, streaming video, really replace fact-to-face? If so, how will that affect ethics? Hmm..... Will we be able to trust what we see as the truth?

Serenity by the seaside...

Meantime, back in 1919....

What? That's a long time ago. Anyone studying history will find that this was a pivotal year for change...some say, those beginning changes are still being worked out today. It began with World War 1 and included the Spanish 'flu epidemic. Fifty million deaths, globally. Another timeline that might be interesting: 1302 to 1400. Now, that's a really long time ago. It was a century of turmoil, though: the Black Death pandemic (ebbed & flowed three times, & killed two -thirds of the population of Europe & England), the faltering of the feudal system (very hierarchical), & those changes led to the Renaissance, to the Reformation, to the concept of individual liberty. The point about pandemics, that cause extensive global deaths: they bring forward societal changes of a profound nature. What will be the outcome of this unexpected episode? Will it mean the end of the globalism experiment? Will we see pods/a city state environment, linked online? Will a centralized government be in control? What about currency...will it be cash? Or a bitcoin alternative? Hmmmm..... Is the age of travel over? Will it be virtual travel? Who has the editing function?

In change, lies opportunity.

Who's in charge?

Well, on Salt Spring, we are a part of the provincial government's Islands Trust, brought into being in 1974, to "preserve & protect" the environmental beauties of the Gulf Islands. The provincial government asked Salt Spring if they would like to be a Gulf Islands style of municipality. The Trust (2 elected trustees per Gulf Island) would remain, but a mayor/council would also be elected, to directly represent Salt Spring. In September, 2017, a referendum was held, & 63% of Salt Springers said "no change". We are firmly in 1974, thus. The CRD (Capital Regional District), also a Victoria based group, is the other part of our local governance. There is an elected CRD director, who attends CRD meetings in Victoria. Where is the specific Island voice? This pandemic may be pointing out to Islanders that we might have been better served with on-island representation, elected by islanders. Hmm....Was it a missed opportunity not to become a municipality?

Summer dreams....

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Real estate is always changing. The bottom line is to make sure the consumers interests are well served. In a secondary home/discretionary/recreational area, such as the Gulf Islands, sellers are affected by events in the places the buyers come from...it is not a local market, here. Will the pandemic make people seek out rural areas? Will they want to be able to grow their own food? And will they rely on virtual reality videos to discover their future properties? Will they buy sight unseen? 'Will realtors become interpreters of properties & lawyers will write the contracts? Does this mean commission driven businesses will change to information rich virtual sites? Hmmm..... Change, change, everywhere a change...I remember that tune. In change lies opportunity. A time to be moving forward is with us now. We don't get to choose "our time", but we do get to choose our attitude to shift.

Going forward....

It's not easy to project, to predict future outcomes, when the "now" is full of uncertainty...with no past script to guide us. Looking at history & past pandemics (Black Death, Spanish 'Flu), it shows us that societal disruptions occur, when the pandemics are over. The shut-downs, globally, to try to "flatten the curve" of the epidemic, have their own repercussions. Business closures lead to staff lay-offs & to business failures. Government efforts to recompense are not always even-handed. Making people stay at home/social distance can bring mental health issues to the fore. Is domestic violence on the increase? Is theft at closed store locations on the rise? Is fear creating unexpected dislocations? There are always unforeseen reactions to any changes. Government spokespersons are saying that this cap on activity may be with us for several months, & when some restrictions are slowly lifted, it will be a new reality...not a return to the old model. One thing for sure: online communications will be required. This style of communication is less personal...it has its own dynamics/patterns...very different from face to face interactions. The acceptance of virtual reality means that with significant video walk-throughs, a buyer may make an offer on a home without physically viewing...in some cases, there might be a subject condition for a walk-through, but not always. In a secondary home/discretionary/ recreational region, where background information from a resident real estate agent might be extremely helpful to a buyer, will the virtual world answer successfully all questions? Hmmm..... It may take five years out from the end of the covid-19 outbreak before we see the real effects of this abrupt scissoring of two worlds...the "Before" (pre-March 12th) & the "After" (which is not with us yet). Time to practice our periphery vision again...don't go down the prepared tunnel...pull on your creative socks.

Always be looking...there's always a beautiful discovery!