

# Is reopening Robert Pickton's trial going to be worth it?

We owe it to the victims to see him charged for all of his crimes



ELLIOT  
GOODINE

point

On 9 January, BC Attorney General Wally Oppal announced that the Crown would be appealing the verdict in Robert William Pickton's trial. Despite having recently found Pickton guilty on six counts of second-degree murder, the prosecution now wants Pickton to be tried for 26 counts of first-degree. While these new endeavours may appear to be overambitious, they're absolutely necessary in terms of showing respect to the families and women affected by Pickton's acts.

Granted, the primary purpose of the justice system was served in Pickton's first trial, as he will never walk the streets again. He received the maximum sentence of six life sentences with no chance of parole for 25 years, which will be sufficient for locking up any murdering scumbag for the remainder of his days. But simply because we have a man behind bars doesn't mean that the justice system has finished the job.

The families of the women who were murdered want to see Pickton convicted of every count of murder for which he was charged. These people have been wronged by him and deserve to be acknowledged in his punishment process. Our justice system shouldn't only focus on rehabilitation and protecting society from psychopaths like Pickton; it should also be an outlet for exposing the truth to the loved ones of the victims.

Secondly, the original six verdicts, which found Pickton guilty of second-degree murder, ought to be looked at again. To call what Pickton did a non-premeditated act is ridiculous. Had he killed

one woman, a reasonable argument could be made that no forethought was involved. But when Pickton killed 26 people and used elaborate and grotesque methods to hide the evidence on his pig farm, it's absolutely illogical to consider any of these cases not to have been planned. Second-degree murder charges for Pickton trivialize what he did, making an evil man seem to be simply impulsive.

It's also especially important that all of the charges are seen in court because these women were involved in the sex trade, and to deny them attention in this fashion leaves one at a loss to say what the government is doing for women involved in prostitution. Besides not having enough programs to find these women meaningful work and education, the Harper government vocally opposes the safe injection sites in Vancouver, which have been safeguarding addicts and prostitutes from disease.

**The families of the women who were murdered want to see that Pickton is convicted of every count of murder for which he was charged.**

Had Pickton's victims not been prostitutes, there would be less hesitation to convict him further. Simply because these women were involved in unsavoury affairs doesn't mean they have less of a right to due process.

While one can't deny that further work in the legal system will be costly, this shouldn't be a factor that determines that the work isn't worth doing. Do we really want history to show that the Canadian legal system gave its most notorious serial killer a mere six second-degree murder charges?

Justice has been served; further deliberations are just superfluous



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counterpoint

The original verdict against Robert William Pickton saw justice served, and to think otherwise plays to the biblical desire of an eye for an eye—not due judicial process. He has been given the maximum sentence for crimes of this nature: that is, life in prison with no eligibility for parole until 25 years after his conviction. On top of all that, the chances of any parole board releasing him are next to nothing, so it's very safe to say that he'll see nothing but prison walls for the rest of his life.

**The world knows that Pickton killed these women—just because a judge hasn't banged a gavel over it doesn't change that fact.**

Still, some people just can't be satisfied. The Crown's motion for a new trial intended to charge Pickton with the additional 20 murders is both a huge and completely unnecessary act. The first trial alone spanned an entire year and cost BC taxpayers \$46 million dollars. Not to mention the additional (though undeniably necessary) price tag of \$70 million spent on the prior two-year investigation beforehand. Mind you, that was only to convict him of the killing six women; the time, money, and legal complexity involved in convicting him of 20 more murders would be astronomical.

Convicting him of additional murders will do nothing to increase his present sentence—and that's only if he's found guilty. For the first trial the Crown chose to charge him with the the six strongest cases. It's one thing to base a court case around one or two shaky accusations, but to try to convince a jury to convict someone of 20 more murders is a tall order.

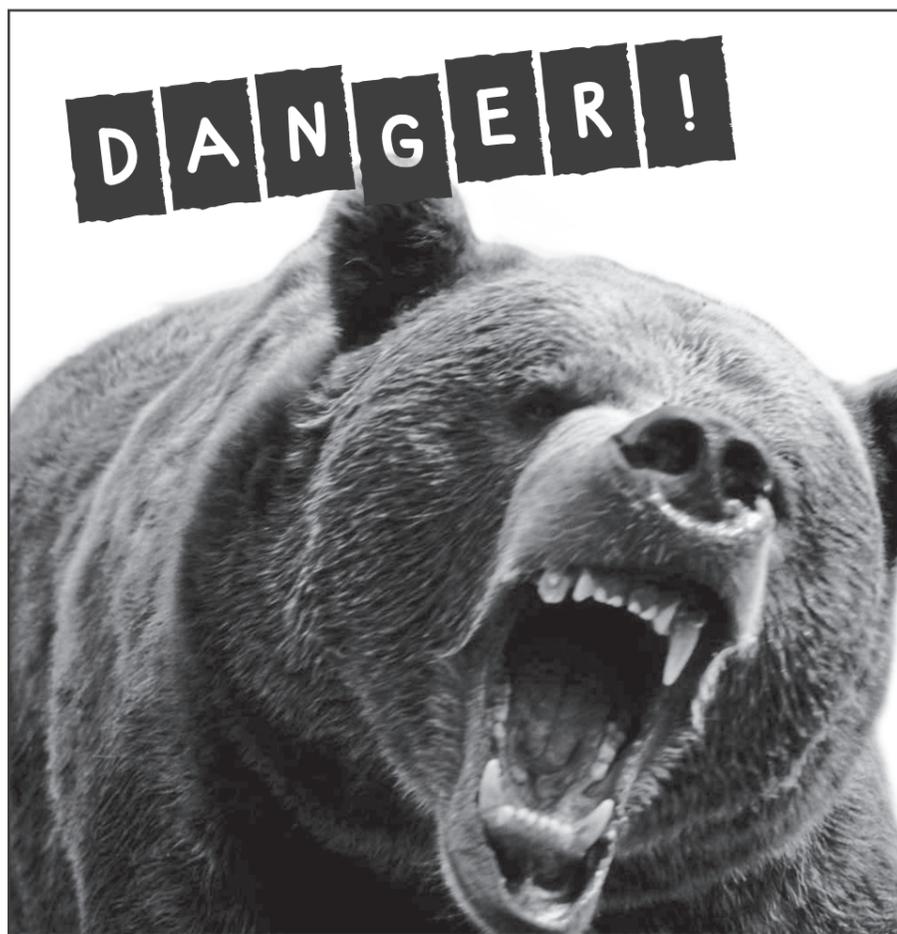
Overall, dragging this case on isn't what the public needs right now. Saving the evidence and reopening the trial if Pickton is ever foolish enough to apply for parole makes sense, but to open a second trial only a month after the first is closed would be ridiculous and over the top.

Some will argue that it's a matter of closure for the families and friends of the victims—that it's part of the healing process. But for the families of the six women Pickton was charged with murdering, it does nothing but reopen some very deep wounds. The loved ones of the other 20 need to take solace in the fact that this man will, in all likelihood, die behind bars.

The world knows that Pickton killed these women—just because a judge hasn't banged a gavel over it doesn't change that fact. Justice has been served, perhaps not to the the fullest and most useless extent, but enough for the public's purposes.

If emotional healing is still an issue, there are ways to deal with loss that don't involve the courts. Supports groups aren't that hard to come by, and there are plenty of families changed by this man's horrible acts. There must be others willing to talk, cry, and let go with fellow loved ones of the deceased.

Overall, putting Robert Pickton back on trial is a reckless decision that will do more harm than good. The victims' loved ones, and the nation's bank account, don't need this extra stress. The last thing anyone should want right now is to put Canada through the horrifying circus that is Pickton's trials again.



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