

Pickton inquiry's problems underscore the truth about poverty: With its narrow scope and financial challenges, it seems Oppal commission is as powerless as the vulnerable women it aims to serve

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Poverty. Prostitution. Addiction. That trinity made Willie Pickton's murderous spree possible.

Yet it's unlikely that trio and the desperation it engenders will be aired at a judicial inquiry set to begin Oct. 11.

It seems there's no money for delving into the darkest heart of the problem behind not only Vancouver's missing women, but Canada's....

With regret, I suggest that maybe it's time to scrap the whole thing.

Maybe everyone should just walk away, like the more than half a dozen groups who initially asked to participate.

Maybe we should all just admit defeat and quit pretending that this is anything more than a \$5-million charade, despite the good intentions of the inquiry's commissioner, Wally Oppal.

Pickton preyed on women who had nothing left but a desire for their next fix.

He operated in a legal and social environment where the women he killed were regarded as unworthy of time, energy and resources to help them when they were alive, find them when they were missing or go after their killers once their bodies were found....

Hundreds of Canadian women and girls -- disproportionately from first-nations communities -- are unaccounted for, with more added to the list each year.

They disappear not only from the Downtown Eastside (DTES) and the equally notorious Highway of Tears, but from small Prairie towns, Atlantic villages, from reserves and from almost every urban centre.

By granting standing to a broad group of participants, Oppal seemed inclined to widen the focus beyond police, Pickton's victims and even Vancouver.

With proper legal representation, they might have cross-examined witnesses and challenged evidence and assumptions. But the cost is prohibitive for most groups whose constituents are the poor and vulnerable prey of men like Pickton.

And Attorney-General Barry Penner and Premier Christy Clark have refused to pay for their legal fees....

When politicians and citizens don't care about powerless, voiceless, invisible women, police and prosecutors don't either.