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Our Partners



## Ex-hooker to cover Pickton trial

By IRWIN LOY, 24 HOURS VANCOUVER

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When Pauline VanKoll takes her seat in a crowded New Westminster courtroom next week, she'll know something some 300 other accredited journalists likely do not - what it's like to walk the streets as a sex-trade worker.



Accused serial killer Robert Pickton.

VanKoll is one of two former prostitutes who will be covering the trial of accused serial killer Robert Pickton for Orato.com, a Vancouver-based website that promotes "citizen journalism."

VanKoll says she'll have a perspective traditional media won't.

"I've been there," she says. "I've had pretty bad dates where I didn't think I was coming home."

VanKoll, 42, worked the Downtown Eastside streets for two decades. They're the same streets from which women have been disappearing from since the early '80s.

Pickton is accused of killing 26 of the missing women. Testimony in the pending trial is expected to be explicit and grueling, but VanKoll says she won't be fazed.

She's most interested in giving sex-trade workers a voice.

"There's so many people out there that judge us and stereotype us," says VanKoll, who has been off the streets for six years. "They figure that we're good for nothing, that we're not people. We don't feel things. We're just objects."

Pickton's trial begins on Monday.






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