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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

Tuesday, February 14, 2012

● (1530)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good afternoon, everyone.

This is meeting number 24 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on Tuesday, February 14, 2012.

Happy Valentine's Day, everyone.

Today we are continuing our study on the use of electronic monitoring in both a corrections and a conditional release setting, as well as an immigration enforcement setting, with a view to determining effectiveness, cost efficiency, and implementation readiness.

In our first hour we will hear from the Department of National Defence. Appearing before us, as you see here today, is Mr. Anthony Ashley, director general at the Centre for Security Science, Defence Research and Development Canada. We also have Mr. Pierre Meunier, portfolio manager, surveillance, intelligence, and interdiction, Centre for Security Science, Defence Research and Development Canada.

Welcome to our committee.

I understand we have an opening statement from Mr. Ashley. We look forward to those comments, and then we will go into a round of questioning.

Mr. Ashley.

Mr. Anthony Ashley (Director General, Defence Research and Development Canada - Centre for Security Science, Department of National Defence): Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, members of the committee.

My name, as you heard already, is Anthony Ashley. I am the director general of the Defence Research and Development Canada Centre for Security Science, and I have been in that position since the centre was established in 2006. As you already know, I am here with Mr. Meunier, who is my portfolio manager for surveillance, intelligence, and interdiction, which is one of the portfolios we manage through the centre.

This afternoon I would like to provide you with a brief overview of who we are and what we do, our relationship with Public Safety Canada, and the expertise we believe we can bring to bear to support the exploration of an electronic monitoring program.

The Centre for Security Science was established in 2006 through a memorandum of understanding between the Department of National Defence and Public Safety Canada. It is managed by Defence Research and Development Canada, or DRDC, as we call ourselves. DRDC is a special operating agency that's actually within the Department of National Defence, and its primary task in that context is to provide S and T support to the department and to the Canadian Forces.

The mission of the Centre for Security Science is to pull requirements and priorities from the policy and operational communities and to task the science and technology community in government, industry, academia—and also our international partners, I might add—to develop solutions that address these priorities. So we play sort of a spanning role between the operational policy communities and the real technologists and engineers out there in the community.

Among my centre staff are scientists and engineers with a wide range of relevant experience, but also those who possess expertise in areas such as capability-based planning, risk assessment, operational research, knowledge management, project management, community building, and application of scientific methodologies. We therefore believe we are well positioned to provide trusted advice to our client base.

Over the years the Centre for Security Science has built a network of experts it can draw upon to serve the needs of the public safety and security community. So, as I mentioned, ours is very much a spanning activity.

Through hundreds of projects and activities, the centre and its partners have improved Canada's capabilities, ensuring that responders, planners, and policy- and decision-makers have access to the scientific and technical knowledge, tools, processes, and advice they need to protect Canada's interests.

Last Thursday you heard testimony emphasizing the need for scientifically validated evidence to support decision-making on electronic monitoring. This is where the capabilities of the Centre for Security Science could be brought to bear to provide advice on technical requirements that would need to be met in order to meet operational requirements as defined by Correctional Service of Canada or others. I emphasize there the difference between technical requirements and operational requirements.

In relation to electronic monitoring, Defence Research and Development Canada has experts in navigation systems who intimately understand GPS technology, including such issues as jamming and operation in challenged environments. We can also draw upon expertise in data management and geographic information system-based display technology, as well as other expertise from within the Department of National Defence, for testing of these types of devices.

We also have access to a broad range of experts in other government departments, industry, and academia through our networks and communities of practice.

In conclusion, the Centre for Security Science can bring to the table the technical expertise necessary to support Public Safety Canada and Correctional Service Canada decisions surrounding the technical requirements and performance factors of electronic monitoring devices.

That is my opening statement.

Thank you very much.

● (1535)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Ashley.

We'll move into the first round of questioning, starting with Ms. Young.

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Thank you so much, Mr. Ashley, for coming in and giving us that really broad overview. The work that you and your department do is very impressive.

Could you just tell us overall, given that you're an expert in the technical aspects, what types of electronic monitoring are available?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I have to say that our involvement in this activity with Public Safety Canada and Corrections Canada is really very much at the beginning stages. We've had a number of meetings to outline what we might be able to bring to the table, so we're actually just getting started looking at these sorts of things.

There is, obviously, an initial range of devices that one would consider looking at. GPS-enabled devices, devices that just use radio frequency information, and biometric devices, for example, can all play a role. The real issue, as I said in my opening statement, is for us to get a better understanding of the operational requirements, so that we can then transfer those into technical requirements and assess those technical requirements against the devices that are currently available.

Ms. Wai Young: What I'm hearing you say is that you want to take a look at the business case and scope out what the business requirements are prior to making a technical recommendation.

Mr. Anthony Ashley: We can only make a technical recommendation against operational requirements. It's not proper just to examine the technology, itself. There is a range of issues, such as what is the interrogation interval for the device. Do you need to know where the individuals are every two hours, every three hours, or every five minutes? Where does the device have to work? What does it have to be able to withstand in terms of punishment or environmental conditions? We need to clearly understand that first.

Ms. Wai Young: Right. I understand.

In coming today you are at a very preliminary stage. You haven't had a chance to review the business requirements, and therefore you are not in a position to recommend one or the other.

Mr. Anthony Ashley: That's absolutely correct. We're very much at the beginning stages.

Ms. Wai Young: May I ask you then if, in the beginning stages, you've had an opportunity to at least take a look internationally at what kinds of electronic surveillance mechanisms are being used in other countries.

Mr. Anthony Ashley: We do have a rough understanding of some of the technologies that are available, and they do, I think I've already mentioned, fall into the GPS-enabled devices or base station systems that use RF—radio frequency—monitoring. People don't talk a lot about biometric systems, but you can use biometric systems in certain circumstances, depending upon, again, the operational requirement.

There are a number of companies that we've had a very quick look at, but we've really not done any evaluation of their technologies yet, because again, we don't understand the operational requirement at this stage.

Ms. Wai Young: Setting the operational requirements aside at this point, because we obviously don't have that, could you very quickly give us a sense of what these three systems that you've already mentioned are—the GPS, the radio, and the biometric?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: The GPS systems use an embedded GPS capability that the person wears, and that GPS capability produces a system log of where that person has been based on a connection with the GPS satellite system. That information is either downloaded in real time using something like cellphone technology through a monitoring site, or it could be downloaded at the end of the day to show where the person had been during the day. Those are the basic core principles of a GPS-type system.

The radio frequency systems tend to be based upon a system technology where you only want to know whether the person is within a certain distance from a particular base station. If the person's wearing a small bracelet and they go more than 100 metres, or 100 feet—whatever the range is—away from the station, an alarm is set off.

For the biometric base systems, which people don't tend to talk about, you're looking at a situation where you simply want to know whether the person came home that night. You could have a biometric scan of some sort—a retinal scan, a thumbprint, or something like that—to give you the confidence that the person, at one point during the day, actually was at that site.

Again, all these things depend upon the operational requirement.

Ms. Wai Young: Mr. Chair, how much more time do I have?

The Chair: You have two and a half minutes.

Ms. Wai Young: Okay, great.

Based on your understanding of these three different technologies, which ones are currently being used in Canada for electronic surveillance?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I can't really answer that question. To be honest with you, we haven't done the survey. The deployment of these devices and their use on a daily basis is not part of our responsibilities. I think Corrections Canada is probably the best route to answer that question.

I would be surprised if biometrics was being used. I believe some of the provinces are using some of the other technologies, but our knowledge on that is very limited at this point in time.

● (1540)

Ms. Wai Young: As a follow-up to that question, have you been in a situation where you've been able to study any of these technologies?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: We've looked at a few of the product catalogues, but that's about it. Part of a comprehensive program to look for these devices would be to translate the operational requirement into a technical requirement and then look at the devices available that meet that technical requirement in principle and according to the manufacturer. Then they would have to be evaluated in a wide range of circumstances, because the technical requirements—or the catalogues, if you will—provided by the manufacturers tend to tell you the best performance in the best-case situation. They don't really allow you to truly understand the limits of the devices. So you'd have to go out, buy some of these, and test them.

Ms. Wai Young: Okay.

Mr. Chair, how much more time do I have?

The Chair: You have under a minute.

Ms. Wai Young: Since you're at a very preliminary stage on the operational side, can you tell us about the costing of these three technologies?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: Based upon some of the reading I've done, which again is very preliminary, the GPS-enabled devices are likely to be the more expensive. One of the problems with GPS systems is they can range from very simple to extremely complex. GPS isn't just GPS; it's a hugely complex field. You have to try to understand what actual GPS technology is being used by the individual manufacturers, because the overall performance can vary markedly, depending on what their implementation looks like.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now move to the opposition. Mr. Sandhu.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Thank you for being here.

You talked about a preliminary stage. What do you mean by that?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: We've had some initial discussions with Public Safety and Corrections Canada about our potential involvement in this activity. We're still awaiting a more formal task. My centre tends to take on tasks that are written down and agreed to. We haven't agreed to any specific activity yet, so we're spending a little bit of our time trying to understand some of the initial aspects of this —waiting to decide on what official task we might get.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: When did you get that directive from Public Safety or Corrections? Was it in the last couple of weeks or months?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: We made initial contact with some Public Safety folks a number of months ago for a very initial discussion.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: What exactly has the Corrections department or the Public Safety office asked you to do?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: They haven't asked us to do anything specific yet. We could engage with the end-users or the policy-makers to understand how they think they want to use these devices and characterize the operational model. Then we could say, “If that's the capability you need, you need to have devices that have this type of technical performance”. Then we would go out and see if the devices that are currently available meet that technical performance specification.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: You talked about three different ways surveillance could be done: GPS, radio frequency, and biometrics. Can you tell me about the advantages and disadvantages of the GPS system?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: A GPS system gives you, in theory, the opportunity to have real-time tracking of individuals, as long as you're in a situation where you get reasonable GPS coverage from the satellite system.

The RF technology is generally used, to the best of my understanding at this time, to determine whether an individual has moved away from a specified location. You can't typically use that to track people, so you would put it in their home or at their place of work.

● (1545)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: You talked about “in theory”. What do you mean by that?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I don't want to bore you with technical details, but the theory behind GPS technology is basically that you have the series of orbiting satellites, which transmit signals to a receiver. If you know where the satellites are, and if the satellites all have synchronized time clocks and the signals all arrive at your GPS receiver without being distorted or modified in any form, then your GPS receiver has a computer inside it that uses those signals to determine your location.

The problem is, that's the theory behind it, and all sorts of practical issues get in the way. I'm sure you've all tried to tune in radio stations that are too weak and are fuzzy because the radio station is too far away or your receiver is in a poor position. That's the sort of thing that can happen with a GPS receiver. It's receiving a radio wave, just like a radio receiver.

There are all sorts of other issues. The radio waves have to pass through the atmosphere to get to your GPS receiver, and as they pass through the atmosphere, they become distorted as well. All of these distortions—and there are other ones we could talk about—tend to create ambiguity concerning the location of the receiver. This is where you get into some more technical detail. Depending upon the complexity of your receiver, you can deal with these distortions to a greater or lesser extent.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Let me get this right. What you're saying is that if we were in an underground subway, it wouldn't work?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: That's correct. Most GPS signals will not penetrate into deep underground areas.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: So if we were in a building the size of this one, with seven or eight floors, you wouldn't know which floor the person is on, most likely.

Mr. Anthony Ashley: That's likely correct. Now, I must admit that I'm not sure about some of the high-quality military receivers, but certainly for conventional, lower-cost receivers, that would be the case, I believe.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: I'm going to go back to the preliminary stage that you talked about. What sorts of settings did the Public Safety or Corrections people talk about—what sorts of people? Is it just for the prisoners, or for other applications?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: We haven't really discussed that operational requirement at all yet. The only discussions we have really had are around our ability to provide them technical support. I think we're at the point where they believe this is a possibility, and if they agree that we want go ahead with some sort of activity, then we'll get into these other issues.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: I want to talk about cost. When you're setting up new technology, once you know the operations, the cost to set this up could be quite a bit of money.

Mr. Anthony Ashley: Again, we haven't looked at the cost, so I don't really know. The total cost has to take into account all sorts of factors. It's not just the GPS receivers themselves.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: What are those factors?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: Well, they're issues associated with monitoring the data. Someone has to monitor the data so that the GPS receiver, if you want to call it that, transmits the data back to some sort of monitoring site. But what do you do with it? Someone has to sit there and analyze it and make a decision as to what to do. There has to be a follow-up process of some sort. If you believe someone has transgressed, you have to presumably do something about it.

Those are issues more for the Public Safety and Corrections guys to deal with. From a technical perspective, there are obviously technical things that need to be solved as you go through that operational requirement.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: What are the technical difficulties with the radio frequency-operated electronic monitoring?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I'm just going to say that we haven't really looked into the details, but I would assess, based upon my previous background as an electrical engineer, that there are much fewer difficulties than with the GPS situation.

The Chair: Thank you. We're well over seven minutes.

We'll now go to Mr. Jay Aspin, please.

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions are directed to Mr. Meunier.

Mr. Meunier, do you, in your expert opinion, feel that this technology, if implemented correctly, will keep Canadians safer?

● (1550)

Mr. Pierre Meunier (Portfolio Manager, Surveillance, Intelligence and Interdiction, Defence Research and Defence Canada - Centre for Security Science, Department of National Defence): It wouldn't be appropriate for me to comment on that. I can answer some of the technical questions with Dr. Ashley, but—

Mr. Jay Aspin: Sorry, I can't hear you.

Mr. Pierre Meunier: Things to do with the overall performance of the system, in the way you put it, are outside my purview.

Mr. Jay Aspin: Do you believe that electronic monitoring deters offenders from committing offences or breaching their conditions?

Mr. Pierre Meunier: Again, that's a question that is better posed to Public Safety Canada, the policy and criminology folks over there.

Mr. Jay Aspin: I'll try another one.

What complaints are associated with the wearing of bracelets equipped with GPS or radio frequency transmitters?

Mr. Pierre Meunier: Complaints?

Mr. Jay Aspin: Yes.

Mr. Pierre Meunier: I would hazard to say, from what I have read in some of the literature, that there is a tendency for frequent alarms and a need to respond to alarms that are caused by a multitude of factors. I think that's one of the complaints that you read about. In fact, it's documented in the report that Correctional Services Canada made when they evaluated their pilot study.

Mr. Jay Aspin: Would it be useful to increase the use of electronic monitoring in the immigration enforcement field?

Mr. Pierre Meunier: I can't answer that question either.

Mr. Jay Aspin: Mr. Ashley, can you answer those questions?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: No, I'm sorry I can't.

Again, we're here as technical experts and advisors to Public Safety Canada and Correctional Services Canada. Those types of questions, I think, are more appropriately directed towards those departments.

Mr. Jay Aspin: How about the first question I had? Do you feel that this technology, implemented correctly, will keep Canadians safer?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I can't answer that. I'm sorry.

Mr. Jay Aspin: Those are all the questions I have, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Good try.

Ms. Hoeppner.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Thank you. I had a few questions, so I appreciate Mr. Aspin sharing his time with me.

You talked about the three different types of technology. I realize that you haven't actually studied them based on the necessity for any kind of monitoring. Obviously, it sounds like you know these three systems quite well, and you said you didn't want to bore us. It's not really boring for us, and we really need it spelled out really simply, and we probably need it spelled out two or three times.

It's not something that many of us have studied a lot. I wonder if you could just explain GPS radio frequency and biometrics in some other platforms in which you have used them, or other technologies or other purposes that you may have not used but have studied. I found your GPS explanation very helpful, and I actually would like you to have gone into more detail. If you can just do that in a little more detail....

Talk slowly for all of us—not you.

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I talked a little bit about the Centre for Security Science and what our role is: to reach out to the policy and operational community, find requirements, and then reach back into the hard-core science and technology community to talk to the experts. While I may sound like an expert in GPS...I'm an electrical engineer but not really an expert in GPS.

However, we have a group of scientists and engineers at our laboratory at Shirley's Bay who are in a program we call navigation warfare. It's a program that is developed to support the Canadian Forces and their use of navigation technologies. These guys are world-renowned experts. They have written standards for NATO panels; they work very clearly with the high-end navigation problem. They're very interested in dismounted navigation or navigation in urban canyons, because a lot of activities by the Canadian Forces involve sending soldiers into confined areas more and more in cities, as opposed to into the open countryside.

We actually have access to world-class scientists and engineers who understand the intricate details of these things to the nth degree, literally, far more than I could explain.

That technology base is there to be drawn upon. We simply need to find a way, as I said, to transfer the operational requirements into technical requirements and then go and ask these guys for their opinion as to what these various technologies are capable of doing.

When we talk about biometrics, we have a biometrics program within the department that looks at biometrics in support of the Canadian Forces. I can't really talk about that in great detail. Pierre has been doing some work in biometrics with the broader public safety security community.

Maybe you can say a few words about that, Pierre.

● (1555)

Mr. Pierre Meunier: Yes, I can comment a little bit on reaching, at certain hours...random phone calls to a household. One of the problems is that one can't always identify the person answering the phone, and in a family setting you really don't know who you're talking to if there are many people in the household. The problem seems to be the identification of the person, making sure it's that person at that time who is respecting the curfew when they're being called upon.

One way is to use voice recognition. There are other ways where we could institute some kind of biometric measurement device associated with the telephone system to make sure the person holding the set at the other end is undoubtedly the person you want to talk to. There are some ways of ensuring that the person is where they say they are.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to Mr. Scarpaleggia, please.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Who makes devices like this? Is it subsidiaries of large corporations? Are there little start-up companies that specialize in this area?

You were saying you've been flipping through catalogues, but there can't be that many companies out there that make this kind of equipment, can there?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I'm going to ask Pierre to answer that because he's been looking at those more than I have.

Mr. Pierre Meunier: I know some of the companies are quite large; they have absorbed smaller companies and are now offering the service. How big are the companies? An example is 3M.

There are only about half a dozen companies or so that—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Half a dozen worldwide?

Mr. Pierre Meunier: Worldwide, yes; maybe between half a dozen to a dozen. It's a fairly small field.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: If 3M or any other conglomerate is buying up a little niche company like this, they must believe it's a growing market. I guess they think there's potential and they might have government relations folks at their disposal, but maybe that's a question for another witness.

How many different kinds of products, then, could there be? You would think it's almost one-size-fits-all. There can't be too many variations on the theme. I would think it's either ankle bracelets or a bracelet.

I understand you could have a GPS system, you could have a biometric system, you could have a radio frequency system, but within each category there can't be too many options, can there? We're not at that level of market segmentation, I would think.

Mr. Pierre Meunier: No, you're correct in your perception. There are two-piece GPS systems and one-piece GPS systems. There are the types that are the RF frequency and there are combinations of the two that you can get, but that's about it.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Interesting.

One of the things we heard at the last meeting from Dr. Bonta, I think, was that there can be significant margins of error in terms of the information these devices give out. For example, he said the system could be telling you that the person is moving in a certain direction and in fact they're actually at the other end of town. Have you delved into those kinds of quality issues, those kinds of precision issues?

● (1600)

Mr. Anthony Ashley: Again, the folks I mentioned who work out at Shirley's Bay look at those sorts of things in a military context. Those inaccuracies tend to fall into this word “drift” that people use all the time. As I tried to mention earlier, the basic GPS technology, the cheapest form of implementation, basically assumes that you've got these nice, direct, uninterrupted paths from the satellite to your receiver, and you've got at least four of these and the signal is very strong. Based upon those assumptions, depending on the processing you use, because all these different units potentially use different processing inside them, you can say that this device has an accuracy of something—say 10 metres, 20 metres.

The problem is that accuracy is only valid while all those ideal conditions are satisfied. As soon as the signal starts to break up and you don't get good signal lock, then the accuracy goes down. As soon as the radio waves bend as they go through the atmosphere, and a whole bunch of other factors, the accuracy starts to be degraded.

Someone asked earlier about the cost. I think cost is probably a big issue. The manufacturers of these things, of course, try to keep them inexpensive, so as a result of that they're all trying to use the cheapest technology or the least expensive technology they can find. We haven't looked at the range of devices, but I wouldn't be surprised, for example, if a device costs twice as much, if it's designed properly, it's probably a better device because it incorporates a number of different ways to try to mitigate all of these factors I just tried to describe. Military systems, which cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, are actually quite effective at mitigating those factors, but they come in boxes, not something you can strap on your leg.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: If you were to get some specifications from Correctional Services Canada, what would you do? Would you buy off the shelf, or would you actually start working with a supplier who would then either design or modify a product to suit your specific needs? In other words, is it a customized product or an adapted product or is it pretty much off the shelf?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: Again, that's driven largely by the cost. I can't imagine that a Canadian program could afford to go out and improve on the performance of these devices. Pretty much, I think, you're looking for something that's off the shelf, and the question is what the differences are in the implementations.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Yes.

That's pretty much it for me, Chair, other than to say that if you do buy some, make sure they work in cold climates.

Mr. Anthony Ashley: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Scarpaleggia.

We'll now move back to the official opposition.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Morin, you have five minutes.

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): I want to begin by thanking the witnesses for coming here to talk to us. It's been very interesting.

I would like to know more about the various types of devices, especially as far as active or passive systems go. I would like to know what the difference between those two types of systems is and what each system's limitations and weaknesses are.

[*English*]

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I'll respond in English, if you don't mind.

The terms “active” and “passive” refer, as we understand it at this point in time, to the GPS type of systems. Active refers to the notion that the system is essentially in continuous contact with the monitoring centre. How often it actually interacts with the monitoring centre is, again, one of these operational specifications: does it need to be every five minutes, every 10 seconds? But the system is basically using cellphone technology to be in contact with the monitoring station on an ongoing basis, so in theory you could track someone's ongoing path. A passive system, as I understand it at this point in time, is one where the path of the individual during the day is logged on the device itself and there's no communication with the monitoring centre until at some point in the day, when the device is connected up to a transmitting unit, if you will, that downloads the information to the monitoring station and you can then see where the person was during the day, but of course it's hours later.

So depending upon the requirement you have, you can use either an active or a passive system, but it's all dependent upon how much oversight you need to have of the individual.

● (1605)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Some studies have indicated that analysis, especially on GPS technology, was time-consuming and expensive. Could you tell us what the difference between active and passive GPS devices is, especially regarding data analysis?

[*English*]

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I think—and I'm speaking not so much from experience but based upon my intuition as an engineer—if you have a system like a GPS system, which can actually log the individual's position on a minute-by-minute basis, that represents a fairly large data file of information that needs to be transmitted and sorted and digested by some individual who assesses the response, whereas one of the RF systems or biometric systems tends to work based upon a single sample of information that's sent to a monitoring centre. So the amount of data that goes to the monitoring centre is far less, and obviously far less effort is required to understand what it means. It tells you where you are now and that's it, not where you've been, etc.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: How much time do I have left, Mr. Chair?

[*English*]

The Chair: You have two minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Between the moment the alarm goes off and the intervention, the signal must first get to the monitoring centre, be transferred to the probation officer and then to the police. Can these devices really be used to prevent a crime? I would like to know what you think.

[*English*]

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I'm not a police officer and I'm not involved with Corrections Canada, so I really can't answer that.

From a technical perspective, the response time from the time the individual transgresses to the time that a police officer is informed of the transgression could be very short. I don't know what that means for the police community or for the Corrections guys. You'd have to ask them that question.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: Thank you.

Mr. Bonta, who testified last week, told us that the false alarm rate could be as high as 70%. Is that possible? Can you confirm that statement?

[*English*]

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I think it depends upon the circumstances. If you're in a very heavily wooded area close to big buildings, you will get very poor data. In fact you could get huge numbers of false alarms. So it's very situation-dependent, and it's hard to come up with just one number for the false alarm rate. You need to say, "In this circumstance, this is the false alarm rate that we had expected. In this circumstance it would be higher. In this circumstance it might be lower." So it's very dependent, and getting one number to describe it across the entire spectrum of possible circumstances would be very difficult.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go now to Mr. Trottier.

Welcome to our committee, Mr. Trottier.

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Dr. Ashley and Monsieur Meunier, for coming in today.

I like your description of the technical requirements of these new technologies and how they have to flow from the functional and operational requirements. Can you describe how long you've been working with Public Safety Canada and discussing those kinds of functional requirements? I'm not sure when the terms of reference came into effect.

Mr. Anthony Ashley: In a more general sense, if you're asking me about the Centre for Security Science—

Mr. Bernard Trottier: I know the Centre for Security Science was established in 2006, but when did you enter into this arrangement with Public Safety Canada?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: Do you mean for this electronic monitoring issue?

● (1610)

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Yes.

Mr. Anthony Ashley: Over a number of months now we've had a few relatively brief interactions, if you will, to try to understand what we might be able to bring to the table. The situation, as I understand it, is that Public Safety and Corrections are looking at doing something else, and they're looking for potentially some form of advanced technical support to help them in whatever it is they're going to do. Frankly, I don't know what it is they want to do at this stage.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Have you gotten to the stage where they've discussed some of their operational requirements? Has there been nothing like that?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: No. I mean we have in vague terms, but nothing in the context of being able to actually quantify it in a formal way that could lead to a technical specification.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: From the research you've been doing, can you describe some of the operational requirements that have been put forth in jurisdictions in which they are using electronic monitoring? What are some of the things that are out there and have proven difficult to accomplish with the existing technologies?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: The whole issue of this general word "drift" that's used in GPS systems is clearly a problem. It would appear that the technology is not satisfactory in all circumstances. The question is whether we are focusing too much on those few circumstances when it's not satisfactory and blowing that out of proportion. I don't know the answer to that, as we haven't looked at it yet.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: I guess you've been doing some research and seeing what's out there.

Mr. Anthony Ashley: A little bit.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Are there countries or jurisdictions that are using electronic monitoring a lot? Are they getting some success from it?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I know a number of countries, just anecdotally, that have used it. I can't really tell you the level of success, because we haven't looked at it from that perspective. We've been trying to focus more on some of the technical issues.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: I see. Is there a sense that in Europe there is more use of it than in the United States, Japan, Australia, and other places like that?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I honestly can't answer that question.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Okay.

Ultimately this thing has come down to a certain business case, I suppose. The priority is public safety, but if we could conduct correctional services and monitoring services more cost-effectively, this would be a useful application of these technologies. Has anybody out there done a business case to show how this could save money in correctional services?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I know there are various views on this, but we haven't engaged in a discussion of those views because it's outside our scope of involvement in the activity.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Sometimes there is the potential to develop technology in Canada through programs like this. I know in defence procurement, for example, other countries will direct some of the procurement processes to local suppliers to develop capacity in a local market.

Are there any Canadian companies, small or medium-sized enterprises, that could be cultivated as potential vendors? It would be interesting for us to help them along.

Mr. Anthony Ashley: There could be. It's my impression that many of the devices available in Canada are made in other countries and they have Canadian distributors for them. So I'm not sure that there's a thriving or even a growing Canadian capability.

Pierre, maybe you have a comment on that.

Mr. Pierre Meunier: I haven't come across any small Canadian companies that are trying to make a go of this. I haven't come across anything in

[*Translation*]

my overview of the technology.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now move back to the opposition side. Madam Borg.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Thank you.

I know that the workforce needed to operate this technology has been mentioned several times. Those employees need to sit in front of a screen and check in real time where the tracked person is, and so on. Do you know how many people it would take to monitor one person? What would the ratio be?

[*English*]

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I can't tell you; I don't know. We haven't looked at that. We have a wide range of capabilities within other parts of Defence Research and Development Canada that look at concepts for command and control systems with the Canadian Forces. In a general sense, the monitoring facility could be likened to a command and control centre, so there are possibilities of doing some of that sort of work in the future. But I'm not an expert in that area, and I can't really comment on it.

● (1615)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Charmaine Borg: I understand that different types of technologies could be adopted. I also know that a few provinces already use certain technologies. Could their model be used, or would something new have to be developed?

[*English*]

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I'm not familiar with the details of what other provinces are doing. If we were to get involved, we would probably go and talk to the users in these other provinces to get some of their views. But we would be focusing more on the technology applications. It would be good to get their experience in the use of the technologies and to find out their views on some of these issues. We've talked about false alarm issues.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Charmaine Borg: I also want to know whether the response time is fast once it is noticed that someone has left a geographic area or gone beyond a certain limit. What would be the response time? Does that depend on the officers or the technology?

[*English*]

Mr. Anthony Ashley: Again, it depends. In theory, if you built an appropriate system, you could get an alarm directly from the GPS device into a monitoring centre virtually instantaneously. I can't tell you what the current systems do in that regard because we haven't studied them yet, but there's no technological reason why you can't get an immediate alarm. But all these things come at a cost. That's one of the issues, because you can do almost anything if you're willing to pay for it. So I really can't comment any more than that at this point.

The Chair: You have two minutes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Charmaine Borg: Costs were mentioned several times. Do you have an estimate, a specific idea of the costs involved? Could you give us a general idea of what the costs could be, in terms of maximum and minimum amounts?

[*English*]

Mr. Anthony Ashley: In our brief survey so far, we've seen some numbers that people quote. I don't know where those numbers come from, but people talk about $5 and $15 a day. I don't know where those come from. I don't know what their operational model is that allows them to come up with those estimates, but they're out there. Again, I think one of the things that needs to happen is an analysis of those cost figures, and we could, in fact, get involved a little bit to help do some analysis. These numbers are floating around out there. I read them, but I don't know how they get them at this point in time.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Charmaine Borg: Do I have any time left?

[*English*]

The Chair: You have another 40 seconds. We can come back.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Yes, we can come back.

The Chair: We'll go to Candice.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Meunier, I wanted you, if you could, to talk a little bit more about the biometric aspect. That's new to us. We've heard about GPS and radio frequency, but not the biometric. Regarding concerns of an individual having cumbersome monitoring around their ankles, or something like that, biometric sounds like it wouldn't actually be something that would be on someone's ankle or on the body. Can you just describe it, and could you maybe give us a little bit of hypothetical in terms of any way to use it if people are moving around? I'm just thinking they would have a cellphone, but I guess then we have GPS attached to that as well. Is there any way that you've heard of, or that you could expand on for us?

Mr. Pierre Meunier: What I've been exposed to is the application for curfew purposes mostly. That's what I've heard about. I know that in Quebec they were looking at a set of options that would help them do electronic monitoring. Biometrics was one of the things—it's not on the market—that they were considering developing. They said that voice recognition has some pros and cons. That could be used; that's an existing system.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: Is it in Canada already, or do you mean it exists?

Mr. Pierre Meunier: I'm saying that the technology is there that allows you to identify somebody through their voice. If I'm not mistaken, I think some jurisdictions might be using that, maybe not in Canada, maybe elsewhere, but these are possibilities. You phone at a certain time and the individual has to answer, and you verify that it is in fact that person at the end of the line, and that line is in this location, so you know.

● (1620)

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: Obviously, the key points to using that would be the specific location and what the desired outcome is.

Mr. Pierre Meunier: There may be some applications, some operational requirement for this, and that might be a fairly common way to do it. When people phone up, if they want that extra level of assurance that it is the person who they want to talk to who's at the end of the line, then that can be implemented.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: Would I be right in assuming that it would probably be the most expensive of all the three options?

Mr. Pierre Meunier: I would say not, no.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: Not necessarily. If you think in terms of volume, it wouldn't be the most expensive technology. GPS probably would be.

Mr. Pierre Meunier: According to the business case that the Province of Quebec was building, it would be a cheap option.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: I think we all appreciate that you haven't done the research on this, that you're just waiting to hear what the requirements would be and then you can do the research, but I think from what we're hearing, ideally it would be a combination of all three of those, depending on what's happening, if we're talking about someone who should be restricted from going to a certain location.

The radio frequency might be the best thing because then you can see if they've crossed the line or gone to a location they shouldn't. GPS could do that as well, but if it just has to do with someone having a curfew, it could be a combination. I think we're probably all at the same spot right now where we're just trying to investigate some of the best ways to monitor.

Mr. Pierre Meunier: If I could add to that, because you asked what kinds of technologies there were, there's alcohol monitoring and also drug monitoring.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: How does that work?

Mr. Pierre Meunier: In the case of alcohol and maybe drugs, they can determine from your sweat whether you've had any, so there are monitors you can place. I don't know how effective they are. I have come across that. If that's one of the conditions of release, for instance, then that's an operational requirement to determine. That would be an option to look at.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: Thank you.

That's all I have.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Sandhu.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: You talked about accuracy or different devices that are available. How accurate is the voice recognition system? Is it foolproof, Pierre?

Mr. Pierre Meunier: I don't have empirical evidence of that. I'd have to look into it. I know it can be quite good in certain circumstances. If you have a very noisy environment, it doesn't work so well. The perfect system is never out there. It is an option that can be looked at. I think noise and background noise are one of the issues in the study I read about from the Province of Quebec. They wanted something that was more foolproof, like finger vein authentication, for instance, a fairly low-cost device you put on your phone that only you can access, that kind of thing. It's an idea at the moment. It's not a product.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: So the voice system is not a foolproof system. It could have problems.

Mr. Pierre Meunier: Yes, it could.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: You've had a chance to look at some of the devices out there? Can you describe some of them?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: We've only looked at catalogues, if you will. We haven't physically sited the devices. We haven't really done any real analysis on them. I think Pierre has looked at them in a bit more detail than I have.

Pierre, would you like to comment?

Mr. Pierre Meunier: I've looked at the bracelet technology for the most part.

● (1625)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: How much time do I have?

The Chair: Three minutes.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Pierre, you've looked at the bracelets. Because we don't know the operational side of it, and these are generic devices, do you think with operational leads for corrections we would need major modifications to these devices?

Mr. Pierre Meunier: I think they were designed for correctional purposes. I think that what is off the shelf is probably what....

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: So we wouldn't need any modifications for the bracelets you've looked at?

Mr. Pierre Meunier: I can't think of anything right off the bat.

Mr. Anthony Ashley: I think it gets back to the performance you require. Companies make these devices. They make them according to a specification. Frankly, I don't know where they get that specification from. We've talked about how they work, under ideal conditions maybe to meet that specification, and under less than ideal conditions they probably don't meet the specification.

When you talk about improvements, it would seem clear from what we've heard that some people think these things don't work as well as they might. So improvements might be necessary. Again, that's all very tightly linked into the environment you're trying to operate them in and the operational requirement. So you really need to do that analysis to determine where the shortfall is, if there is one in terms of the technical capability of the device.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: That's my last minute, Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Madam Morin.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin: I was told that, according to certain studies, these devices cannot be destroyed or tampered with. Could you provide us with more details on that, please?

[*English*]

Mr. Anthony Ashley: Any physical device can be subject to physical abuse. These things aren't made out of titanium. I think they're largely made out of reinforced plastic. There's waterproofing; there's the whole issue of whether you can tamper with them, whether you can use electronic devices to interfere with the radio signals. All of those things are possible to some degree. It's a question of to what degree you want to make these things tamper-proof or make them hard enough, if you will, that they don't interfere with the individual and yet can't be cut off.

These are all trade-offs in the design of the device. You need to say that you need the device to be able to do this, and it can't be cut off with this type of instrument. It needs to be able to withstand an electric field from at least two feet away.

These are the sorts of technical specifications we talk about.

The Chair: All right.

I have a couple of quick questions here.

In some respects, I don't apologize, but I feel bad that you have not been given a direct mandate to research this. It's a very broad scope that you've looked at.

If a government was looking at some type of electronic monitoring...and according to our study here, our motion is:

> That the Committee undertake a study, for no less than eight meetings, of the use of electronic monitoring in both a corrections and conditional release setting, as well as an immigration enforcement setting, with a view to determining effectiveness, cost efficiency, and implementation readiness.

If a government were to say that the provinces are doing this, that we want to better understand what's out there, would you be the only agency we would go to?

Our science and technology department—that may not have the same type of science. Because of your involvement with the Department of Defence, this is the type of thing that you may use in that department.

Mr. Anthony Ashley: Certainly, I think you'll find in the federal government that the Department of National Defence has some of the best support for this type of activity, but other people may well be able to provide input as well.

In fact, if we were tasked to do something, one of the first things would be to find out who all those individuals were and bring together a team. It doesn't have to be a team from inside DND; we're willing to work with others to find the best people who know the most.

● (1630)

The Chair: If the government decided, or if Corrections Canada decided, to implement some type of monitoring system for some low-risk offenders, and if part of this motion of our study deals with implementation readiness, what's out there now?

As you went through the Sears catalogue of Maxwell Smart-type merchandise, is it ready to—can you just order them and there you have them?

Mr. Anthony Ashley: We can't tell you that right now.

That's one of the things.... Again, from our perspective, the way we do our work, we need—to belabour the point again—to interact with the operators, the communities that want to use these things, and they have to tell us what the constraints are on using them.

We would then translate that into these technical specifications and see if we can find something that meets those specifications. Some of the current products may or may not meet those specifications.

The Chair: Good. Thank you very much for appearing before our committee today.

We are going to adjourn for a couple of moments. We will then invite our next guests to come to the table for their comments.

We'll suspend for one or two minutes.

● (1630)

(Pause)

● (1630)

The Chair: In our second hour today, we're hearing from three witnesses.

I'll just say that very seldom do we ever have two presentations from the same agency or from the same group, but I guess we'll allow that today. We have, from the John Howard Society of Manitoba, Mr. John Hutton, the executive director. And our committee also welcomes back Catherine Latimer, the executive director of the John Howard Society of Canada.

Appearing as an individual, we have Paul Gendreau, professor emeritus of the University of New Brunswick. Professor Gendreau is a visiting scholar from the University of North Carolina. In 2007 he was appointed as an officer of the Order of Canada, and he has published extensively on what works in the assessment and treatment of offenders and the evaluation of offender treatment programs.

I invite each of you to make an opening statement before we proceed to questions from our committee members.

Do you each have a presentation?

Perhaps I'll begin with you, Ms. Latimer, and then we'll move to Mr. Hutton and then down to Mr. Gendreau.

● (1635)

Ms. Catherine Latimer (Executive Director, John Howard Society of Canada): Thank you very much. It's great to be back before the committee.

As you know, the John Howard Society of Canada is a community-based charity whose mission it is to support effective, just, and humane responses to the causes and consequences of crime. The society is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

We have more than 60 front-line offices across the country, many with programs and services to support the safe reintegration of offenders into our communities and to prevent crime. Our work helps to keep communities safe and to make them safer.

The John Howard Society is pleased that the committee is studying the issue of electronic monitoring in the corrections system. This concept dates back to the 1960s. There have been an awful lot of tests to bring it forward and to use it in the corrections system. We welcome an opportunity to look at the evidence for the effectiveness of those particular initiatives.

Essentially, electronic monitoring is often brought forward to try to reduce the prison population. The need for measures to reduce prison populations in Canada is great and growing. Despite a decade or more of falling crime rates, prison crowding has been reported as a problem in many provinces and territories, and this is likely to get worse with the expected influx of new people in custody following the enactment of Bill C-10.

Our contention is that there are more effective, fairer, and more humane ways to reduce the prison population than by using electronic monitoring, and there are many challenges with electronic monitoring.

I will not go into a great deal of detail because I know my colleague John will be raising some specific ones. I will just mention that one of the real risks with electronic monitoring is that they widen the net, and you end up imposing the electronic monitoring on the people who would have been in the community without any kind of monitoring in any event, and not really as an alternative to custody.

They are expensive. They may not be promoting pro-social conduct. The most the monitor will tell you is where the person is, not what the person is doing. Some are limited in their availability to more affluent detainees or offenders. These are the ones for which there is a precondition that you need to have access to a land line or phone, so if you're not in a residence that has that capability, you wouldn't be eligible for that type of electronic monitoring.

They may not reduce recidivism; the studies are inconclusive about whether the electronic monitoring achieves correctional objectives. And they may replace programs that have higher success rates and are more humane. Many offenders need not just monitoring but support and human connection if they are going to overcome their challenges and safely reintegrate back into their communities.

In conclusion, prison crowding in some Canadian custody and remand facilities has exceeded levels that were found by the Supreme Court of the United Sates to violate its constitutional protections against cruel and unusual punishment, which are similar to the Canadian charter protections. The need to find ways to reduce the numbers in custody is great. It might be worth testing models of electronic monitoring in evaluated pilots to assess whether they reduce prison populations and overcome the known shortcomings.

However, the John Howard Society of Canada believes that there are more effective, fairer, less expensive, and more humane ways to reduce the prison population than by using electronic monitoring. We would be pleased to work with parliamentarians and others on implementing immediate solutions to the prison crowding crisis.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ms. Latimer.

Now to Mr. Hutton, please.

Mr. John Hutton (Executive Director, John Howard Society of Manitoba, Inc.): Thank you, and thank you for the opportunity to appear in front of you today.

I think I have a slightly different experience, and I hope you don't mind having both of us here. The John Howard Society of Manitoba runs two programs that monitor offenders and ex-offenders in the community, and I wanted to draw on some of that experience.

I have looked at the minutes of your last meeting and some of the reports, and you have had a lot of information about the effectiveness or the lack of effectiveness of electronic monitoring. I wanted to do something a little different today. Rather than look solely at the effectiveness of electronic monitoring, I would also like to address the benefits of human monitoring and why I would not like to see it replaced with some kind of radio or GPS device on its own.

I do have three quick concerns with regard to electronic monitoring. The first is that on its own it does not reduce recidivism or even prevent someone from committing a crime. This can be seen from the results of a pilot project undertaken in Manitoba in 2008 that was focused on youth who were considered high-risk car thieves. Upon review, it was found that while six youths successfully completed their term of supervision, seven more removed the device, another tried to cut it off but failed, and yet another stole a car while fitted with a monitor. I have sent a copy of the media release along with my statement to the clerk so you can see it for more detail. This was an example that showed that the monitors on their own did not prevent the youth from getting into more trouble or even stealing more cars.

Secondly, electronic monitoring is very expensive. I'm aware of a pilot project in Ontario launched in 2008. It cost over $850,000 to track just 46 parolees, all of whom were volunteers, suggesting that they were not at high risk to reoffend or they likely wouldn't have volunteered to wear the monitor. One parole officer could have provided human supervision for the same number of people in the community for one-tenth of the cost.

When evaluating electronic monitoring, the comparison should be not with incarceration but with the other forms of community-based monitoring.

I'm going to just skip over, I think, more to the point that the two presenters who spoke on the 9th stressed—that electronic monitoring would not be successful as a stand-alone approach, but should be combined with other kinds of programming and intervention. From my own experience at John Howard Society of Manitoba, I would take this conclusion one step further: interventions can succeed on their own without electronic monitoring at all.

The John Howard Society of Manitoba operates two programs that monitor and supervise clients. The first is a community-based alternative sentencing program, which has been evaluated quite positively by one of your other presenters, James Bonta, and which is known as the restorative resolutions program. Clients in this program have all pleaded guilty and are facing a jail sentence. They could be at low, medium, or high risk to reoffend. They could be a first-time offender or someone with a lengthy record, but in each case the client is prepared to take responsibility for his or for her actions and wants to repair the harm they have done in some way. The client works with the staff member in preparing a sentencing plan, and if approved by the court, the client carries out the plan while living in the community under the supervision of this office.

Our office supervises these individuals. They come in and meet once a week for a sit-down meeting for at least the first three months with that staff. There are phone calls, there are checks on curfews, checks on employment, and if a client is seen as failing to comply, they can be breached, and the program does breach clients if it has to.

On the other hand, we have a 90% completion rate, and the recidivism rate for this program over three years, which is quite good, is only 22%. That's half of what would happen when looking at people serving custodial sentences for similar types of crime. So there is a very low rate of recidivism—and very successful in terms of that—and we use no electronic monitoring.

● (1640)

Second, we just started operating a bail supervision and support program. It hasn't been evaluated, so I don't have the same kinds of statistics in terms of recidivism, but it is targeted at medium- and high-risk clients who would not otherwise be granted bail. This is funded by Manitoba Justice. Their challenge to us was that we get the guys out who would not otherwise get out and they would consider funding this program.

Something similar we do is a plan that assesses the risk factors of the individuals. If bail is granted, the individuals come into our supervision and care. They may live in a residence we have in our building. They're under our supervision and our support. Curfews and employment checks are made. Our first client has successfully completed the program, which just started in November, without reoffending. He attended his court date, as he should.

In neither of these programs do we use any kind of electronic monitoring. I would suggest that some of the strength of this program is the contact between the staff and the client. We establish some trust and a bit of a relationship, even with things as mundane as a phone call every night to verify the curfew and to make sure that the person is where he is supposed to be. We can verify where someone is, because we only phone land lines, so we know that the person is at the other end of the phone. We can also check in and see how he is doing. If somebody has a problem—maybe he's having trouble with an addiction—we can deal with it right away.

I would just let you contemplate that for many of the uses of electronic monitoring, it may be possible to monitor individuals in the community even more cheaply and more efficiently with human monitoring or those kinds of supports. If electronic monitoring is not seen as being particularly successful without those supports, then at the very least you would consider doing it together with them. But why not consider perhaps the possibility that it might be more efficient to put more resources into monitoring programs that involve reporting to a trained individual who is both supervising and supporting the individual while he is out in the community?

In conclusion, I wanted to give the example of the two programs, noting that we work with medium- and high-risk offenders. With the program that has been evaluated already, we've had a very good recidivism rate. That's where I wanted to take the presentation. What I wanted to leave with the committee this afternoon is the idea that perhaps the alternative is not electronic monitoring but is some other kind of monitoring that could be equally, if not more, effective for less money.

● (1645)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Hutton.

Now we'll move to Mr. Gendreau.

[*Translation*]

Dr. Paul Gendreau (Professor Emeritus, University of New Brunswick, Visiting Scholar, University of North Carolina, As an Individual): Thank you.

Unfortunately, my French is not very good. So I will speak in English.

[*English*]

Electronic monitoring must work because I got noticed at 11 o'clock on Friday night, when I was here briefly in Ottawa, and asked if I could appear at this committee. I'm representing myself. Hopefully my friends in North Carolina, where I live most of the time, will know exactly where I am. I don't want to go to a North Carolina prison, let me tell you, if I breach whatever thing I am under.

I have a number of points to raise. I'll try to be as brief as possible within the 10 minutes. I have provided an outline to the translators because some of the comments are fairly technical. I assume they will be translated, as the clerk has mentioned, for you to peruse later on.

First of all, I'm a researcher. I started working in corrections in 1961 and spent most of my life in Canada. I'm a Canadian citizen, and have worked extensively in the U.S. and some other countries. Part of my job is to evaluate the effectiveness of various kinds of programs. When you compare similar groups of inmates on regular probation versus those on electronic monitoring, the results indicate there are slight increases in recidivism of 1% or 2% for inmates on electronic monitoring versus those who are on regular probation. This is not an outlier result. The standard result for all forms of sanctions—boot camps, drug testing, shock incarceration, in and out of prison quickly, and more versus less prison time—all indicate that there is no effect on recidivism. The sample size we have now from our studies over the years is 500,000.

Secondly, I'm going to give you a lot of information from the U.S. perspective, which may generalize to some extent to my home country here. EM is reserved for low-risk offenders. The general estimate from people in probation, who I work with and deal with in the United States, is that it is three to five times more costly. In addition, when low-risk offenders are revoked for a technical violation—and many of these are trivial, such as you weren't here in the place you should have been, or this and that—what happens is that they are returned to prison. These low-risk offenders who were revoked for a technical violation, which is far removed from a serious or even a minor crime, go back to prison and increase the cost even more so.

Thirdly, electronic monitoring has the danger of being a school for crime, because almost all offenders on electronic monitoring are low-risk. They are sent back to prison. Who is in prison? They are mainly high-risk, serious offenders. If you hang around high-risk, serious offenders, we have data, generated in Canada, that indicates there will be more recidivism. For example, if I keep living about 20 miles from the South Carolina border and keep visiting friends there, I'm afraid I'm going to be a tea partier in the next couple of years. We'll see, but it does work that way.

Electronic monitoring is not foolproof. You get false alarms, you have dead zones, and you have tampering. This was alluded to in the previous presentation. I'll give you a couple of anecdotes of what happens. This is a recent case from when we were chatting with colleagues in the southern United States. An offender was emitting signals from his bracelet that were troubling. The police and probation officers were alerted. They go across town—this is not cheap, mind you—with their sirens blaring. The offender was in the swimming pool, dipping his ankle bracelet in the water. That caused all kinds of alarms, and that led to a crisis. You get those circumstances. They are not common, but even if you have these kinds of breakdowns 10% or 15% of the time, it is an enormous cost to the public.

Electronic monitoring doesn't tell you about the presence or absence of others in your environment, or what they are doing. That's very important to recognize. You could be in a place you shouldn't be in, but you could be with individuals who are pro-social, and you could be doing all kinds of things that are not related to any kind of criminal behaviour. Here are some subtle things that happen with electronic monitoring in our experience. Electronic monitoring produces an enormous amount of information.

● (1650)

I imagine some of your party whips are probably interested in electronic monitoring and applying it to you to see exactly where you might be. Please reassure them it will produce a tremendous amount of information: what grocery store you went to, whether you made a wrong turn on Bank Street, how many times you've been to the LCBO. Who knows? You might even have been talking to an opposition party member.

That sets up an enormous amount of information, and when that happens, it dramatically increases the work of probation officers.

EM, electronic monitoring, sets up a system for wilful negligence if banking hours are kept. In some jurisdictions in America, and possibly in Canada, they've had 9 to 5 electronic monitoring. Say something happens at 5:06 or 3 in the morning; then all heck breaks loose and you have to deal with that situation. Some jurisdictions that had the banking hour electronic monitoring protocol in place have had to go to 24/7 monitoring. If you're going to be monitoring people for 24 hours and you're really afraid of making a mistake when you have these kinds of programs in place, then you're going to have the costs in manpower ramped up considerably.

Here's a subtle point that no one really addresses, but I think it's important. If you put electronic monitoring into a probation service, what you do is you transform the mindset and the professionalism of probation officers. What is your main goal? To survey and monitor people to see if they may in fact be misbehaving themselves. What that means is that probation officers, who are really aware of what their job is and what they will do, will concentrate on looking for technical violations and all sorts of other violations.

It also leads to a CYA orientation to one's work. That leads to more technical violations. In one research project we conducted in New Jersey years ago, we found that probation officers who had a mindset of getting tough and cracking down had technical violations and recidivism rates of their offenders 20% to 30% higher than those who had a balanced treatment versus surveillance approach. So that's an important thing.

Another issue that is raised that you may wish to consider is electronic monitoring for high-risk offenders. I've made that argument in the past, because it seems to me if you want to put someone out in the community for treatment, but they are a high-profile offender and they're at a high risk for committing a crime, you might want to have electronic monitoring. I think that's worth trying. We have no research on that.

But here's the rub. If you're going to take that policy initiative, you put yourself at great risk, because one violation of a particularly high-risk offender who's on electronic monitoring could crash your whole system.

I just came back from New Zealand, where we were looking at correctional policy issues, and indeed that happened. It wasn't particularly an electronic monitoring case, but one serious mistake by a high-risk offender in the community almost abolished the probation department in that country.

So if you want to take that high-risk monitoring procedure in the community, then you're going to have to have tremendous political support to do so.

In the U.S.A., the organization known as ICE—an interesting acronym for Immigration and Customs Enforcement—sees to it that any immigration violators, people who try to get into the country several times, people who have committed serious crimes, are immediately sent to a prison. In fact, the Bureau of Prisons has many immigration cases right now.

What happens is that with families or individuals who are low risk, it seems they're the ones who get on electronic monitoring within the U.S. context.

Here's a final point, and it's controversial. It's an American argument. It has been argued by some criminologists in the U.S. that policies like electronic monitoring and a more Orwellian approach to dealing with individuals have been less about the protection of the public and more to do with economic interests. That's a general, broad perspective. It's controversial.

We have seen in the United States the building of many prisons in rural areas to spur economies. We see the privatization of corrections to be increased substantially more, particularly in the U.S. And with the Supreme Court decision that corporations now are individuals, we can see corporations making huge donations to interested political parties to support commercial interests. That is an interesting wedge that sometimes comes into the system, and that is a peculiarly American sort of situation, but it could apply to some other jurisdictions.

● (1655)

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gendreau. Indeed, thank you to all for your comments.

We'll move into the first round of questioning, and we'll go to Mr. Rathgeber, please, for seven minutes.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to all the witnesses for your attendance and for your thoughts on this important topic.

You all have concerns about this electronic monitoring. It's going to appear that I'm in favour of electronic monitoring, and that's not true, because I haven't made up my mind yet, but just so that we can have a fulsome debate on the topic, I'm going to challenge some of your commentary.

I'm going to start with your last comment, Dr. Gendreau, on economic interests. I can't think of any other philosophical reason why we would go down that road other than to save money.

You all talked about the expense of this. I made notes, and you indicated three to five times more costly.

I think, Ms. Latimer, you said more expensive, and, Mr. Hutton, you said it would be $800,000 to monitor 46 offenders. More expensive compared to what? I'm assuming you mean more expensive compared to community supervision without electronic monitoring. You can't mean versus incarceration, which in a medium security institution in Canada runs close to $100,000 and in maximum security it's well north of that.

Start in any order you like.

Mr. John Hutton: Perhaps I may have been speaking fairly quickly. I'm a little nervous. I did make this point, but perhaps I made it too quickly. What I wanted to have the committee consider is that when you're comparing costs you're not comparing the cost just with, say, incarceration—I think you're right in terms of that—but with the cost of other forms of supervision. Certainly in terms of 48 people in the community, assuming a salary of around $50,000 or $60,000 a year, plus benefits, a parole officer could look after a caseload of 48 without much difficulty. That would be about a $75,000 cost compared to the $850,000. You could probably hire a parole officer to supervise 48 people for about a tenth of that or even less.

● (1700)

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Comparing it to non-electronic monitoring community supervision.

Mr. John Hutton: That's correct.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Dr. Gendreau, the same?

Dr. Paul Gendreau: Electronic monitoring is cheaper than incarceration—

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you. That's what I wanted to clarify, because you also talked about—

Dr. Paul Gendreau: —but it's not cheaper than community supervision. If you were to put high-risk offenders on electronic monitoring in the community, yes, you would be saving dollars. Then you would have to have a system that would be able to stand up to the public pressure when there's a serious incident with a high-risk offender.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Fair enough.

Ms. Latimer, you indicated that you would prefer to see programs with a higher success rate and that are more humane.... This implies somewhat explicitly that you believe electronic monitoring is not humane. I was wondering if you could explain to me why you feel that is the situation.

Ms. Catherine Latimer: Many people who have been in conflict with the law have a myriad of problems, whether it's addiction, whether it's mental health, whether it's family issues. There are all kinds of problems. What we would consider to be a more humane approach is to actually have person-to-person contact with these people in an effort to help them overcome their problems and thereby have a more successful reintegration.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Sure. Reintegration requires social and human contact. I get that.

In terms of the limitations of electronic monitoring—and as I said, this is only our second meeting, but I think we understand this much—it only helps Corrections, or whoever is monitoring, pinpoint the location of the offender. That's all it does, and sometimes not even that. Sometimes the radio ones will only tell you that the individual has left a perimeter. They don't even tell you where he is, but you just know he's not where he's supposed to be. I appreciate the limitations that it's only a location-type device for people who are either on house arrest or are perhaps awaiting trial, or they're on some sort of interim judicial release.

For an individual who was sentenced with some sort of conditional sentencing, if electronic monitoring were combined with the types of programs that you contemplate in terms of rehabilitation and reintegration, would that alleviate some of your concerns regarding the lack of humanity?

Ms. Catherine Latimer: It would alleviate some of my concerns. But going back to John's point, does human contact alone have equal or better results than electronic monitoring plus human contact? If so, you could save a lot of money if you just went with human contact monitoring.

If you need to buttress electronic monitoring with services in the community, and the services in the community have a pretty good success rate in dealing with people, why complicate it with additional costs? That's my point.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: I understand the concept of widening the net. Today, and always, your society advocates for more effective and fair dispositions for offenders in the system. I'm assuming by that you mean less custodial sentences in the first place, as opposed to custodial sentences that are somehow transformed into community sentences at some point. You would like to see less custodial sentences in the first place. Philosophically that's what—

Ms. Catherine Latimer: We're not an abolitionist organization. We agree that at certain points custodial sentences are necessary for certain offenders. If your objective is protecting the public over the long run, you're better off with more community-based sentences as a way of holding people accountable. The recidivism rates are better if you have community-based sentences, as opposed to custodial sentences.

● (1705)

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: That may or may not be true. Some would argue that the recidivism rates are higher among those who are serving custodial sentences because those persons are less subject to rehabilitation.

Ms. Catherine Latimer: Are you saying it's a chicken and egg sort of thing?

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: That person is a worse person, if I can use a colloquialism.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rathgeber. We're out of time.

We'll go to Mr. Sandhu.

If you want to bring some of Mr. Rathgeber's answer in here, you're welcome to.

Go ahead, Mr. Sandhu.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Thanks to the witnesses for coming here today. Your input is very much appreciated.

I want to congratulate Professor Gendreau for being a recipient of the Order of Canada. That's a great honour, and we are pleased to have you here.

Professor Gendreau, you've had a chance to look at the pilot program that was offered in 2008. Can you tell us about the successes of that program, if any?

Dr. Paul Gendreau: Is this the one that Dr. Bonta referred to?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: That's correct. It's the 2008 pilot project that was done in Ontario. You have been quoted by CBC on that.

Dr. Paul Gendreau: I have just taken a look at the paper trail for that program. It was embarrassing as a Canadian citizen to see the mark-up in that program from a technical standpoint and other regards. I thought we had surely developed electronic monitoring long enough to put a program in place that worked more effectively than that, just from a technical standpoint.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: You were quoted in the CBC report as stating that the cost was too much for this sort of program.

Dr. Paul Gendreau: Colleagues alluded to it. Yes, it was an enormous cost.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: I'll come back to my friends from the John Howard Society.

We heard from witnesses at the last meeting that you need an integrated approach to reforming inmates, and electronic monitoring alone will not correct their behaviour. Can you talk about that a little more, Ms. Latimer?

Ms. Catherine Latimer: I can, but you might want to hear from John, who actually works in the field.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: John's good. Anyone is good.

Mr. John Hutton: I was looking at the comments from the fellow from England. He said that where electronic monitoring had been successful, they were using it with high-risk youth. It was one of about six or seven different forms of intervention. There may be a case where it is important to know that somebody is on top of some very intensive kinds of intervention as well.

My bias is towards those interventions and towards having the resources available for the interventions. I do get the point that sometimes people who are not released into the community are the people who pose more of a risk; I think that's what you were getting at. But I'm concerned that there is a trend away from community-based sentences, and they can be quite effective, because a lot of the supports are in the community.

For example, some of the people we work with in our bail program are chronic offenders. They're in and out of custody all the time, but they're not necessarily in for murder or for robbing a bank. It's for assault, theft, robbery.... But they're in and out of custody so often that they can't access supports for an addiction. They can't get the educational upgrading or the employment training they may need in the community because they don't spend enough time there.

What we're trying to do with the bail program I mentioned earlier is to actually allow someone to return and be supported in the community while they deal with some of these issues, and do it more effectively.

In terms of programming, if you're looking at releasing someone back into the community or having someone in the community on bail, let's go beyond simply knowing where they are and just tracking them. Let's try to identify some of the issues and the challenges they do pose, and if the safety of the community can be accommodated at the same time, have the person out in the community where they have the greatest access to the fullest range of supports. That's where individuals can make some long-term changes for themselves.

● (1710)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Basically, you would agree that if electronic monitoring were put in place by Corrections Canada, in addition to that, to reduce recidivism, reoffending, you would still need additional programs to go along with parole, with conditional release and all of that.

Mr. John Hutton: Absolutely.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Last week we heard testimony from witnesses that made it very clear that electronic monitoring is not effective for low-risk offenders. I believe Professor Gendreau also talked about that.

Can you elaborate on that? Why is it not cost-effective? Why is it not effective for low-risk offenders? You talked about the political risk of having a child molester out in society and being monitored. Could you elaborate on that? What has your experience been with regard to the program not being effective for low-risk offenders?

Dr. Paul Gendreau: Whether it's an electronic monitoring program, another kind of sanction program, or drug testing, or whether it is a treatment program or a psychological intervention, they are not effective with low-risk offenders. Why? Because low-risk offenders have, relatively, a very small chance of committing crimes in the future. Say you're trying to demonstrate that a low-risk offender has a 6% chance of reoffending. How are you going to have an effective program that's going to drop that from 6% to 2% or 1%? You have what they call a bottoming effect or, in a way, a ceiling effect.

So when you have low-risk offenders, the best thing to do is to leave them alone. You should be checking up on them occasionally, but your attention should be directed to the high-risk offenders. If you're concentrating on low-risk offenders through electronic monitoring or something else, you're diverting attention away from the individuals who pose the most serious risk to Canadian citizens, those who are a medium to higher risk. There, we have considerable data to show that these programs can reduce recidivism. CSC has also generated some programs indicating that they do a good job in that regard.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Sandhu.

We'll now come back to the government side.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: Mr. Trottier has a question, but I have a really quick question. I'll share my time with him.

The Chair: All right.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: I was just wondering, Dr. Gendreau, with regard to high risks when it comes to immigration cases, do you think it could be useful at all? Say we have individuals who actually already have a removal order placed on them and there are all kinds of indicators that they are high-risk cases; they've done something to have this removal order put on them. We're not talking about low-risk immigration cases, which I know you mentioned in your presentation.

Would there be a use for any kind of electronic monitoring in immigration cases where there's a high risk that an individual is going to take off and find a way to get lost? As you know, in Canada we have a lot of them lost in the country. They have disappeared.

Is there a place for it there?

Dr. Paul Gendreau: Quite possibly, but it's not my area of expertise—far from it. In the U.S., there is ICE, the organization that takes the kinds of individuals you're describing—individuals who have tried to get into the country several times, who have committed a serious crime—and immediately puts them in prison. There is no prevaricating on that.

But if you're considering a policy, you have to define what you mean by a high-risk immigration case. If, let's say, you have a good definition of it and it's empirically supported, then electronic monitoring might be quite possible.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: I think of the cases of some who have come to Canada. They're not citizens. They have committed a very serious crime. They've done their time. Now there is a removal order for them to leave the country, but they disappear.

Dr. Paul Gendreau: Well, if they committed a very serious crime, you might—

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: But they did their time in Canada.

Dr. Paul Gendreau: Yes, precisely.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: So there may be some use for that, according to your research.

Dr. Paul Gendreau: Quite possibly, yes.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: Thank you.

I'll pass the rest of my time to Mr. Trottier.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Trottier.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to touch on a different situation.

Mr. Hutton, you briefly mentioned bail situations.

I have a facility in my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore: the Mimico detention centre. There's a new facility being built, and you might be aware of it. It's a much larger facility, to replace the Don Jail.

The typical population in a facility like this is there for two to four weeks awaiting their bail hearings. I'm wondering if electronic monitoring could help.

I guess our desire would be to get people out of detention. If the decisions are that either bail is granted or bail is denied and the choices are incarceration or freedom, would electronic monitoring allow some discretion to the presiding judge to release a person with the condition of electronic monitoring?

You mentioned the cost being electronic monitoring versus human monitoring. But people in bail situations are accused; they're not convicted of anything. There's no program of human monitoring. That's really not one of the alternatives.

Do you see a usefulness for electronic monitoring in bail situations?

● (1715)

Mr. John Hutton: I think it is possible to have a human monitoring program in bail situations when you're using a group such as the John Howard Society. We are not part of the corrections system, so the person could voluntarily agree to be in our supervision.

I think it is possible to create a human monitoring system even where there is bail. We're doing—

Mr. Bernard Trottier: If I could intervene, what if that person is claiming innocence and does not want to have any human monitoring?

Mr. John Hutton: My experience is limited, but in the Winnipeg example of the young men who were stealing cars, seven of them got their bracelets off very easily. These were teenagers.

I guess the question would be, are you creating a false sense of security by saying if you release the person on bail, at least you'll know where they are and you can always pick them up? Well, you'll know where they are until they don't want you to know.

I'm not an expert, but I've certainly heard that the bracelets can be tampered with. They can be broken, and in some cases they can certainly be removed. I wonder what kind of security you have for the courts in guaranteeing a person—"We'll know where they are, and we can pick them up if they don't come back to court."—if they can tamper with or remove the bracelet.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Ms. Latimer—and maybe Mr. Gendreau, too, if we have some time—could you talk about bail situations?

Ms. Catherine Latimer: I just want to mention that if the grounds for detention are that the person is a flight risk and you could compensate for that risk with the bracelet, that might be one of the cases in which you'd want to have an evaluated project. You're not using it as part of the corrections system; you're using it in the same way I think you were mentioning, to carry out a judicial process.

It's a little bit different in that you're not trying to rehabilitate. You're not reaching out. All you're wanting to do is to make sure they're not absconding from the jurisdiction. I think electronic monitoring might be able to help you with that.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Right. Obviously the problem of being incarcerated, even if it's for two to four weeks, is that people lose their apartments; they can lose their jobs. We'd like to get people out into society, even in bail situations.

Even if it's only a small segment of that population that would benefit from the program, there might be a use in terms of managing risk, and also, I guess, reflecting some concerns of the larger community about people being released.

Ms. Catherine Latimer: I think you'd need to watch the widening of the net. I mean, you're talking about a very narrow subset of people who are detained in custody. It might be very interesting to see if that actually does reduce your pre-trial detention numbers.

I'm a strong advocate of trying to reduce our pre-trial detention numbers. They're way too high.

Mr. Bernard Trottier: Yes, and there are strains on the facilities, obviously, given these very short-term kinds of durations. A big city like Toronto has a lot of people going through the system on a daily basis, so if we can reduce the numbers of people in custody, that would be of benefit to everybody.

I think that's all I have for now.

The Chair: You have one minute left.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: I just want to follow up on something Ms. Latimer said.

If I'm hearing you correctly, where the concerns and where the evidence seem to lie is that electronic monitoring doesn't help in correcting individuals who are out of the correctional system, or still part of it but not actually in a facility, whereas actually using it to monitor someone who needs to be at a certain location but not because of correctional issues...that could work. I would tend to agree with you, but I'm just wondering if you can articulate why that is—a little bit better than I am.

Ms. Catherine Latimer: I would think it's worth testing. I don't know whether it would work or not, but it isn't burdened with the corrections problems that we see with an overreliance on electronic monitoring in the corrections area. You're trying to get people to a deportation hearing and you don't want them to disappear into the Canadian populace. So you're not, basically, trying to rehabilitate; you're trying to keep tabs on where they are. I think that's what electronic monitoring does. I don't think it rehabilitates. I think it does allow you to know where people are. So I think it might well be worth testing.

● (1720)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move back to the opposition and to Ms. Murray.

Welcome to our committee.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Thank you very much. As a visitor to the committee I haven't been party to any of the previous testimony, so that means I get to ask anything.

Regarding first nations, Mr. Hutton, you were talking about the results of your experience with the John Howard Society in Manitoba. Is there any difference between first nations and non-first nations clients in terms of the effectiveness of electronic monitoring or the lack of effectiveness thereof?

Mr. John Hutton: About 70% of the incarcerated population in Manitoba is aboriginal. Seventy per cent of the clients my agency works with are aboriginal, and aboriginal people are about 15% of the total population. So there certainly are some real issues.

I was a little floored by Mr. Trottier when he said two to four weeks for bail hearings. In Winnipeg it's about a year. Our remand times are huge, and probably the program I'm talking about wouldn't be useful in Toronto because it doesn't have that same kind of problem. People may sit in the Winnipeg Remand Centre—and primarily they are aboriginal people sitting in the Winnipeg Remand Centre or another jail—for a year awaiting trial, with a 50% chance they won't even be convicted at the end of it. There certainly are some issues.

In terms of your question, it's a little general for me. There are some issues that particularly first nations people face in terms of being able to get bail—some difficulties around residence requirements and surety and things—so there's probably a slightly higher preponderance of aboriginal people on remand status than there should be because of some of those things.

I don't know about electronic monitoring. I'm not sure I could see where it could be effectively used in terms of the remand population. Those who aren't a flight risk are likely to get bail. Those who aren't getting bail are usually those chronic offenders with some history, and simply knowing where they are isn't going to make a difference. In terms of people coming out of custody—perhaps on parole or on temporary release from the provincial system—once again I think the reintegration of that group of ex-offenders is going to need some kind of human support, interaction, some programming, particularly with aboriginal clients. They do present with more needs for rehabilitation.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Thank you. I appreciate that. I'd like to hear more, but time is short and I'd like to ask just a couple of other questions.

Mr. Gendreau, you were talking about 500,000 people in the various studies that you've been involved with or have reviewed.

Dr. Paul Gendreau: That's the sample size.

Ms. Joyce Murray: I'm just curious. Is there something that makes it tempting to try to figure out an electronic mechanism and get around it that is different if there is human interaction? Is there any kind of psychological thing like that, that research has put its finger on?

Dr. Paul Gendreau: Any evidence there would be strictly anecdotal. There is probably a subset of any offender group that tries to think of ways to fool with the system.

Ms. Joyce Murray: In some of the states, like the state of California with their ruling on overcrowding and release of prisoners into the community from their tough on crime approach, or Texas, has there been a major use of electronic monitoring to deal with the fact they're having to release prisoners?

● (1725)

Dr. Paul Gendreau: Yes. As you know, there are tremendous fiscal restraints, and the crunch...and unless you live in various parts of the U.S.A., you cannot appreciate how serious it is. You just need to read Paul Krugman's articles in the *New York Times* to get a sense of how serious the matter is. Many states are desperately looking at ways to get rid of their offenders from prison.

Ms. Joyce Murray: So the comparison would be the cost of jail versus the cost-effectiveness of bracelets.

My last question, if I have time, is for Mr. Hutton.

You were asking why we wouldn't just do the other community-based.... What's the answer to the question? What constraints would there be to having more community-based, contact-based supervision? Is there a reason to use electronic monitoring because there are constraints on what, according to research, appears to work better?

Mr. John Hutton: I think there are probably lots of good opportunities. I think this committee has an opportunity to look at electronic monitoring not just in the context of having it versus not having it, but in the context of having it along with other programs and other ways of monitoring people in the community. Monitoring is the way people want to go, for many reasons, and electronic monitoring may have some role or purpose in some cases. It's good for the committee to think broadly about other kinds of monitoring as well. I don't see that there are restrictions or problems that would prevent that from happening. There certainly are professionals within the justice community, as well as groups in the community like ourselves, who would be happy to partner with different levels of government to provide support and supervision for monitoring in the community.

Ms. Joyce Murray: So if monitoring is a better alternative than imprisoning, let's look at what's effective in monitoring, rather than focusing in on one particular kind that hasn't been shown to be more cost-effective or more effective than the other kinds.

Dr. Paul Gendreau: But please realize that there's no evidence out there indicating that electronic monitoring reduces criminal behaviour. Of course, who's on electronic monitoring? It's low-risk offenders.

Ms. Joyce Murray: There was a discussion of one kind of situation. It's not clients of the correction system. Are there other situations in which you think electronic monitoring is a good application?

Dr. Paul Gendreau: I'm just repeating myself. Try it with high-risk offenders who need treatment in the community. That is a worthwhile goal to pursue and evaluate. Then you have to have a system that has the applicable wherewithal to stand by and deal with the issues that come when there's a serious mistake.

The honourable member down at the end mentioned a useful circumstance, quite likely high-risk immigration cases.

Ms. Joyce Murray: I took that as a comment on why we should not do it for those at high risk, just because of the political fallout, but I misunderstood that then.

According your research, are there other countries that are using this in a way that is effective?

Dr. Paul Gendreau: There are none that I know of. There could be a study coming up some time down the road that indicates that, but it would be an outlier. There's just an overwhelming amount of data so far indicating that these are the results, and they're not likely to be overturned.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

On that point, it was interesting that in our first comment, when we listened to a professor from Glasgow via teleconference, he said that some were not as effective as others, but he really recommended the Swedish example. We haven't done a comparison of Sweden's to others. I know that some on this committee would like to go a little more in depth into the Swedish one—perhaps so that the committee could travel, but I don't think that's happening in these tougher times here on the Hill.

I want to thank you for coming and for giving us your perspective and your expertise on this. You've been involved in jurisdictions in the United States, Mr. Gendreau, where this is used more.

We also appreciate the work of the John Howard Society and their experience with programming, offenders, and the rehabilitation of some of those offenders.

Thank you for being here.

I see the time at 5:30. We will adjourn. Have a good evening.

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