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Chair

Mr. Kevin Sorenson

Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security

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● (1530)

[*English*]

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

This is meeting number 40 of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, Tuesday, May 15, 2012.

Today we are continuing, or maybe I should even say going back to our study on electronic monitoring. We're looking forward to hearing today from the 3M Company. Appearing before us is Steve Chapin, vice-president, track and trace solutions. Also, appearing with him is Elise Maheu, director of government affairs. We welcome you to this committee. We look forward to your comments.

This study is drawing to a close, and soon we will be drafting our report and making recommendations to the government, so we look forward to your comments. We welcome them at this time, and then we will go into a couple rounds of questioning, if that would be all right.

Mr. Chapin, go ahead please.

Mr. Steve Chapin (Vice-President, Track and Trace Solutions, 3M Company): Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here. I also want to thank you for ordering up some of this nice Florida weather for me, to make me feel at home while I'm here.

My name is Steve Chapin. I'm a vice-president in 3M track and trace solutions, focusing on electronic monitoring. I was the CEO of Pro Tech Monitoring from 2001 until 2011, when 3M purchased my company. I continue to be intimately involved with all aspects of our electronic monitoring business, and I can tell you that I'm thrilled to be part of the 3M family.

My background is engineering, not corrections, so I will focus on the technical benefits and value of a comprehensive electronic monitoring solution.

A quick word about 3M, it is the innovation company that never stops inventing. With $29.6 billion in sales and more than 50,000 products, 3M employs about 84,000 people worldwide, and has operations in more than 65 countries.

In 1951, 3M Canada was established and now conducts activities in the areas of manufacturing, research and development, sales, marketing, and logistics. It employs close to 1,900 people and has eight manufacturing sites and several sales offices coast to coast.

To come back to electronic monitoring, which is the fun stuff, our team pioneered the use of GPS for tracking and monitoring pre-trial defendants and post-adjudicated offenders in our communities. While the core technology remains largely the same—in that we utilize GPS receivers, wireless modems, several security precautions —many improvements have been made over the past 15 years. I brought with me some of my table toys, simply to give you an idea of how far we've come.

This was our original tracking device that we put in the field in 1997. We deployed roughly 6,000 of these devices, and they stayed in the field until 2009. Go back in time to 1997, if you will, and think about the cellphone technology you were using back then. It was quite big.

Today, this is the tracking device we use. This is our premier tracking device. The offender carries this device and he's tethered to it with a 2 oz ankle bracelet that he cannot remove without setting off the tamper alarm. The device has very intensive supervision, and also allows for text and real-time voice communication with the offender.

The other technology is what many people think of when they think of GPS, and that's the one-piece tracking device. This one is an all-inclusive device that also goes on the offender's ankle. That will give you a little bit of an idea of what the technology is.

Today we are the global leader in design, manufacturing, and system implementation, tailored to meet the local needs of the communities we serve. GPS tracking is part of an integrated electronic monitoring solution that includes voice verification; traditional radio frequency, which is sometimes referred to as house arrest monitoring; passive and active GPS in both one-piece and two-piece devices; and alcohol monitoring. These are all accessed and controlled by a single, secure browser-based user interface. Other applications for this technology include elderly care, health care, industrial health and safety, and also in-prison tracking.

Studies show that electronic monitoring is a cost-effective means of employing the latest technology to improve public safety, reduce recidivism, and modify offender behaviour. Electronic monitoring is increasingly utilized around the globe. 3M has contracts to provide solutions in 43 states and in numerous countries around the world, including Colombia, Spain, France, Poland, the Netherlands, and Singapore, to name a few.

Some of the noteworthy 3M programs you may be aware of include California, which has the largest GPS program in the world and is tracking 5,000 offenders using 3M's system. Florida has the longest running GPS program in the world. It was our first customer, and it's tracking 2,700 sex and violent offenders on probation. Michigan has made widespread use of electronic monitoring, with a mix of radio frequency, GPS, and alcohol equipment to track and monitor approximately 5,000 offenders as an alternative to prison, and also for early release.

● (1535)

Spain has a unique program, which equips 750 domestic violence couples with GPS devices. In that case, the domestic violence victim also carries a tracking device like this so the victim can be alerted when the aggressor is in the area.

The use of electronic monitoring cannot prevent a crime. However, it is a very effective supervision tool, which allows trained officers to monitor offender compliance in near real time, identify and correct anomalies in offender activities, and aid in modifying offender behaviour.

A 2011 study conducted by Florida State University and sponsored by the National Institute of Justice, which is a government agency affiliated with the Department of Justice, concluded that electronic monitoring reduces offenders' risk of failure by 31%—that electronic monitoring based on GPS typically has more of an effect on reducing failure to comply than with RF systems.

When selecting a system or a vendor, much of the focus is placed on the tracking device. Tracking devices, while important, play the role of the data collection device, and I'd like to caution the committee that an effective electronic monitoring system is so much more than just the tracking device. It involves officer training, intuitive interface software, customized case management tools, backup systems, fully developed agency protocols, and ongoing expert support.

I thank you for the opportunity to discuss the benefits of electronic monitoring and the key elements that make up a successful program.

I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

We will now move into the first round of questioning.

We will go to Ms. Hoeppner, please, for seven minutes.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Thanks very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both of our witnesses for being here.

We did the study a few months ago and so for some of us coming back to it is a bit of a refresher right now, and some of the comments you have made certainly have tweaked some questions we had previously.

We've heard some conflicting evidence, obviously from different witnesses, with some witnesses saying that electronic monitoring doesn't help in the rehabilitation of inmates, and we've heard, as you put it, that it's primarily a supervisory tool, which can help to ensure that offenders are complying with the conditions of their particular release.

You mentioned this briefly, but it is important that we hear a little more about a statement that you made that we need to recognize that electronic monitoring is not just the monitor itself. Could you go into a little more detail for us in terms of the education and training for supervisors and people who are tracking the monitors?

Could you also let us know what kind of monitoring is needed, from your experience? What hardware is needed for parole officers who are watching it?

Could you expand a little more—and it's great that you brought that device. Mr. Chair, I'm wondering if it would be possible to pass the device around so we could all have a look at it. It would be great to be able to hold it and see what it's like.

Could you talk about some of the other aspects and parts of electronic monitoring, other than the monitor itself?

Mr. Steve Chapin: First of all, I'd like to say that it is not one-size-fits-all. That's the reason I talk a lot about an integrated platform, where it's important to match the technology and the supervision level with the offender.

The system we provide is an all-encompassing system, so it is intended to be able to give an agency complete control over the monitoring of their offenders. We're very often putting these high-tech devices in the hands of people who are not necessarily experienced with high-tech equipment. The training becomes a very important aspect of the program and that's something 3M handles directly with our trained personnel.

The system is set up to be an exception-based reporting system, in that the officer, using the protocols defined by the agency, sets up rules for the offender. If the offender follows the rules, then there are no alerts sent out. If the offender violates any rule, then an alert is sent out to the agency, either by e-mail or text message, and using the protocols, the officer takes the appropriate action.

The data that is provided to the officer is location-based data, but also offender behavioural-type data, in that it gives the officer an indication of the behavioural patterns of the offender. Along with this, we can set up predictive types of scenarios, where we can identify offender behaviour that is not usual, behaviour that we haven't seen in the past, indicating that something might be happening. It's alerting the officer to a potential situation, if you will.

Something else we do is take the location of all of the offenders. We're tracking a population of offenders. We know where they are. Very often they are the usual suspects in crimes. We correlate the location of known offenders with the location of crime scenes, and we can place offenders at or near the scene of a crime. Almost as importantly, sometimes we can identify those offenders who were nowhere near the scene of the crime.

Something else that we discovered very early on in our program is this. We're not only monitoring offenders, but we're also monitoring the way, the manner, in which the officers utilize our system. For example, we ensure the officers are logging onto the system every day and looking at offenders' points. The officers have rules set up for offenders so that if the offenders do something, there's swift and certain action that can be taken by the officer to help change the offenders' behaviour.

Finally, and this is based on experience, we take steps to ensure that the messages we send out are actually received by the officers in charge of that offender. We had an unfortunate incident several years ago where our system worked perfectly when an offender went into an exclusion zone, an area where he was not allowed to go, and he ended up raping a little girl. We sent out the alert, but this was on New Year's Eve, and the officer slept through the alert. So now this is what we do. When the agency desires it, we require that the officer acknowledge the alert. If we don't receive that acknowledgement, we send out another alert to another officer, and we keep doing that until somebody responds.

● (1540)

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: So the alert actually goes to you, and then you notify or you let the law enforcement agency know. It's not that there's an alert that goes directly to the law enforcement agency. You remain part of the monitoring. Is that correct?

Mr. Steve Chapin: We don't intervene with the monitoring. The system is an automated system. We process the alerts automatically, but we process those without human intervention. The devices communicate with our facility, either our facility in Florida, or perhaps in the case of Canada, a local facility, a data centre, that we would set up. Those alerts are processed, and then based on how it is set up by the agency, the alerts go out to the officer, but there's no human intervention.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: What's your cost per unit for one of these types of devices?

Mr. Steve Chapin: We typically work on a lease model, so we lease the units to the agency on a dollar per unit, per day basis. The agency only pays for units that are what we call “on leg”. They only pay for units that are being used, which allows the agency to very accurately budget what their utilization is going to be, what their costs are going to be.

The typical cost for the system, which includes the hardware, and all the services, and all the training, is $5 to $10 a day to the agency, and then on top of that, it's whatever agency costs there might be in terms of personnel.

The agency infrastructure is minimal. It's communication lines and computers. We set it up so that there are no additional costs.

● (1545)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move over to the opposition side and Ms. Doré Lefebvre.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank Mr. Chapin for his explanations and his presentation.

I was not here when the study was done. You will have to excuse me, dear colleagues, if I repeat questions you have already asked. I am very interested in better understanding how these devices work. I am very intrigued by that.

In your presentation, you talked about the type of offenders for whom these devices were used. Usually, do people use these devices for high-risk offenders or minimum-risk offenders?

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Chapin: Typically, the agencies using our devices are putting them on the high-risk offenders already in our community, in order to add an additional layer of public safety. However, from a purely technological perspective, we're capable of tracking the full gamut of offenders from juveniles right up to the worst sex offenders.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Okay.

In the premise of the study, the possibility of using them for immigration control was also mentioned. Would it be plausible to use this type of device to control immigration in a country?

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Chapin: There is no technical reason why it could not be used for immigration.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: In that case, it could be a question of cost. You talked about a dollar a day per device used. Is that right?

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Chapin: Forgive me for giving a range of price, but I'm trying to be as open as I can. We have some of our larger contracts in California, where the price per day is $4 for GPS tracking. Some of our smaller contracts that require many additional services may go up to $10 to $12 a day. For the RF technology, which is not tracking but only monitoring in and out of the home, the price is typically from $1.50 to $2.25 a day.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: It always depends on the contract and the quantity of services you offer. Does it also depend on the quantity of devices you sell, for example to an institution? Will the price of a contract vary based on the quantity of devices?

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Chapin: We structure contracts in different ways. We offer quantity discounts when we hit quantity milestones, because we try to share the economies of scale back with our customers. So the more devices we have in a particular area, the more efficient we can be, so the price goes down.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: You may have talked about this during your presentation, but this type of device, this GPS, is it pretty accurate?

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Chapin: Are you asking if they're very accurate?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Yes.

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Chapin: In our devices we use an off-the-shelf GPS chip set. It's very commonly used. It's the same chip set that might be used in airliners, or by the military. The specifications on that GPS chip set are that 95% of the points recorded are accurate through 10 metres. We actually see slightly greater accuracy than that on occasion.

Sometimes in an impaired environment we may see degraded accuracy. For example, in an urban canyon inside some buildings we might get a little bit of GPS and we'll see degraded accuracy. But we go ahead and transmit. We display that accuracy so that an agent who's looking at a GPS point knows the margin of error on that point.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: In your opinion, what are the disadvantages of wearing this device, apart from the weight, which you spoke to us about? Are there other disadvantages or other advantages, in your opinion?

● (1550)

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Chapin: Being under house arrest is no walk in the park. There are a lot of rules with which an offender must comply, if a program is properly set up. If an offender complies with those rules —and typically in well-run programs we see less than one violation per offender per day—then the offender has the ability to go about and lead a relatively normal life under the constraints of the program.

The devices are relatively inconspicuous. In the case of the two-piece device, it is a real bracelet and it weighs 2.5 ounces. You actually forget it is on. You don't have to charge it. The battery lasts for a year. When the battery is about to be depleted the officer knows it and just simply changes out the unit.

This device the offender wears on his or her hip or carries it in a purse just like a BlackBerry-type device, and when they are home they place it in a charging stand.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: What happens if the offender loses what looks like a BlackBerry, but still has his or her bracelet? Does separating the two parts create problems?

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Chapin: If an offender is separated from the device after a very short period of time—and that time period is adjustable —the device sends out an alert. We call it a "bracelet gone" alert, both to the agency and also to the offender. The bracelet vibrates, alerting him to the fact he is out of range of his device. If he's out of range of that device, at that point in time we're no longer tracking the offender. We know where this device is, but we don't know where the offender is.

However, that is a very severe violation. Typically, if an offender walks out of range of his device, he fixes that situation quickly because he doesn't want to suffer the consequences.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Consequently, the BlackBerry device is really the GPS. Does the thing on the leg transmit signals between the two? I don't understand exactly.

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Chapin: This is actually a transceiver. The ankle bracelet sends out an encrypted RF signal once every 25 seconds and waits for a reply from the device, so it tethers him to the device. The BlackBerry device does all of the tracking, all of the communication, all of the processing of rules. This is merely a tether to prevent the offender from walking away from his device.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move back to the government to Mr. Rathgeber, please, for seven minutes.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to both witnesses.

I want to follow up on some of Ms. Hoeppner's questions regarding the business model of how this operates.

You lease out both of those pieces of hardware, the bracelet and the GPS device that looks like a BlackBerry, for $1 a day?

Mr. Steve Chapin: If I said $1 a day, I misspoke. I thought I said roughly $5 to $10 a day. If I said $1 a day, I apologize to the committee. I certainly didn't mean to mislead you.

The charge, again, depends on the level of service you want, but it's roughly $5 a day and from there additional services go on, and then that's the price. That's what we charge. There are no additional charges.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: When you passed those devices around they had branding on them but I didn't see 3M anywhere. Does 3M manufacture the device? You have brand names there I saw.

Mr. Steve Chapin: Yes, 3M does manufacture the device. The Pro Tech logo that you see on the device is my old company, and we're still in the process of transitioning the branding over from Pro Tech to 3M, but this is a 3M device and 3M is now the original equipment manufacturer of this device. They own all the IP, all the design, and 3M does all of the manufacturing, all of the support development, and what not.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: 3M manufactures it, does support, and they are also in the business of leasing it to probation officers or police services that are in the market for this type of device. You're also the leasing agent.

Mr. Steve Chapin: That's correct.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Does 3M do monitoring or is monitoring farmed out to some other agency? Obviously, somebody has to follow where the offenders are going or not going and alert the police if they're out of range. Does 3M do that or is that farmed out to another organization?

● (1555)

Mr. Steve Chapin: Our preferred model is to lease all of the equipment systems to the agency and the agency actually does the monitoring. However, we do monitoring services for some of our customer agencies, including Florida and California, where all the alerts are processed automatically but instead of the text message alert being sent to an officer, it's sent to our monitoring centre and we follow a series of protocols defined by the agency in clearing out those alarms. Those protocols might include calling the offender or even calling the police.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: What kind of equipment is required to monitor this process in terms of hardware. Who manufactures it and what does it cost?

Mr. Steve Chapin: The equipment is all off-the-shelf computer equipment. You can access this data from any Internet-capable computer. Then, of course, it's data lines and phone lines.

If you had your laptop and an Internet connection and you were an officer and you were at home, you could access all of that data.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: What kind of security is provided? It appears to me that you don't want people other than law enforcement tracking the movement of people who are part of these programs. Is this done on secured lines somehow?

Mr. Steve Chapin: It's all done on secure lines, and we use secure sockets layer. We follow NIST standards. It is password-protected. We force the officers—they don't like us for it—to change their password every 90 days, and we shut down idle accounts.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: You have a certain amount of technical expertise. Do you ever find that other equipment interferes with the operation of the tracking, whether it be satellite systems, garage door openers, or any other electronic devices that can cause the operation of the monitoring of these individuals to go sideways for whatever reason?

Mr. Steve Chapin: There is no legal electronic device that interferes with our product.

There has been a lot of talk about illegal GPS jammers recently. While we can't prevent the jamming of our device, we can detect and report the jamming of our device. If we suspect there is intentional jamming, we give that bit of information to the officer. Other than that, there's no legal means to jam it.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: In the United States, is there a black market for GPS jamming?

Mr. Steve Chapin: We've not seen a significant problem. In fact, most of the problems we have seen have been officers who have gone out and acquired a jammer, simply to show us they can jam the device. But we haven't seen offenders routinely jamming the devices.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Is there a way to monitor a jamming device?

Mr. Steve Chapin: Yes. The jamming device is only a transmitter and one could monitor that. What we do is monitor the presence of jamming and we report that.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: So if law enforcement were so inclined, the technology exists for them to pinpoint the location of a jamming device.

Mr. Steve Chapin: Yes.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you. That was very helpful.

Mr. Steve Chapin: Thank you.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You have minutes left, if there's anyone else who would want to use your time.

Mr. Leef, I see your light is on.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): I was only going to ask quickly if there was any other.... The device has communication by text and voice communication. That's solely between the wearer of the monitoring device and the person. There is no other communication that the person can access, texting, email....

Mr. Steve Chapin: No. The device has automated communication in the event that the offender violates one of the conditions of his monitoring, so there's no intervention required. The device automatically calculates that and displays the message.

We can send automated messages to the device from the data centre, which can be requested by the officer simply logging onto the system.

When the officer receives a text message on his cellphone that says offender ABC has violated this rule, he can hit reply on his cellphone, which routes a message back through our data centre and sends the message to the offender. So with very little effort or time consumed, he can respond to that offender.

Then the device is capable of receiving phone calls from up to five different numbers, because we don't want an offender's girlfriend, for example, to get hold of the number on the phone. Then, by law, he has to be allowed to make a 911 call because it's a cellular device, but other than that there's no means of communication.

● (1600)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to Mr. Scarpaleggia, please, for seven minutes.

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

You mentioned something about alcohol detectors. I missed that. Could you go over that again?

Mr. Steve Chapin: Yes, 3M manufactures a product called MEMS, which is a breath alcohol device that's located in the home. It's hooked up to external power and a phone line. If there's no phone line available it uses wireless communication.

When the offender is at home he will be randomly required to blow into the device. Most of the offenders are on house arrest, so they're scheduled to be home at certain periods of time anyway. The offender blows into the device, and while he is blowing into the device a picture is taken and the results, along with that picture, are sent to the monitoring centre where the results can be reviewed.

It's a breathalyzer. The results hold up in court, at least in U.S. courts.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: You mentioned something about the predictive power of your technology. Again I missed part of that. Do you mean the power to predict where the offender will go next? Could you explain what that means?

Mr. Steve Chapin: We do what's called point pattern analysis and we're looking for commonality between points at given times during the day. When offenders start to deviate from these points, we can look at the deviation and sometimes we can predict when an offender is doing abnormal things that are outside the bounds of his program.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's really interesting, but I'm trying to understand, if their behaviour's abnormal, how it can have predictive powers? You're trying to predict when the offender will go outside the circumscribed area of where he's allowed to be. Is that what you're trying to predict?

Mr. Steve Chapin: Remember that this is exception-based reporting. Rules are set up that an offender must follow, but that also gives an offender a good deal of latitude to stay within the rules that have been established but do wrong, if you will. If we know an offender is scheduled to be at home and at work and at treatment, and the offender is following that pattern every day right on time, no alerts are set. But if on the way to treatment, for example, we start seeing deviations and perhaps the officer's not looking for those deviations because he's only looking for the violations, we'll look at those and see if they're significant and repeatable and alert the officer to a potential violation or potential problem.

We're trying to save the officer time, and we're also trying to prevent the officer from missing something that would be potentially significant. I'll give you an example. We had an offender several years ago who was 100% compliant, except on his way home from work every day, he was taking a shortcut through a neighbourhood and going around and around the block and then going on. We didn't have the predictive technology then, but we used this case as an example. Our technology will pick up that he's repeatedly going off the prescribed route, and that's an area that requires some special consideration, if you will, by the officer.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: In terms of losing track, it's essentially in areas like urban canyons, as you said. That's what you meant by losing track.

Apparently, the technology doesn't work as well with young offenders. Have you found that?

Mr. Steve Chapin: I've not found that to be true.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: That's what I thought we heard.

The Chair: The technology or the rehabilitation or—

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: In terms of reducing failure to comply or that there was a sense, I recall, that maybe younger offenders were more rebellious of the technology. Did we not hear something like that?

● (1605)

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: We heard testimony from the John Howard Society of Manitoba about a pilot project with young offenders who stole cars, but the problem in Manitoba was that there were no repercussions. If they took off the device, there was no penalty or punishment.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Anyone who would not have a penalty for taking it off might take it off. That clears that up, thank you.

How many companies are there in your market? I can't imagine a lot of competing companies. It's government driven, and probably two or three big companies are operating in this market in the United States and you're one of them, of course.

Mr. Steve Chapin: We are one of them. We are the largest in the market worldwide. When I count, there are 10 companies around the world that offer a credible GPS tracking device, and roughly the same number of companies also offer an RF device. But every year some companies say they have a cellphone and they can track offenders, and they want a piece of this government market.

In the United States, there are three, maybe four, credible manufacturers of the equipment.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Do you have dealings at the moment with either the Canadian federal government or provincial governments across Canada? Do you have contracts? You may have mentioned them, yes or no, but I didn't catch that. Do you have contracts with the government? Are you seeking contracts with the government?

Mr. Steve Chapin: Currently we have no contracts for electronic monitoring with the Canadian government, although we would certainly love to be working in partnership with the Canadian government.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Thank you. I'm done.

The Chair: All right.

We'll now move to Mr. Rafferty, please, for five minutes.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Thank you very much, Chair.

Thank you both for being here.

Mr. Chapin, I'm trying to get an idea of the number of alerts that go out. Would you have any idea, just off the top of your head? If you take one set, a state or a city, or someone who's using this device, would it be possible for you to tell us how many bracelets are out and how many alerts, as a percentage, on a daily basis, would go out on that number of bracelets?

Mr. Steve Chapin: Nationwide the number of alerts are roughly 1.25 per offender per day. More specifically, Florida is an example I like to use. Florida has a very well-run program where there are repercussions for all violations. It's fewer than one alert per offender per day. In Florida we're tracking, on any given day, 2,700 offenders, so that's 2,700 alerts. Most of those alerts are cleared very quickly.

For example, an offender comes home 10 minutes late—that's an alert. If the officer wanted to know that the offender is home exactly on time, he would get an alert if that offender is home one second late. If the officer isn't interested in getting alerts for things like that, he's allowed to put a grace period on there, which allows the offender a little bit more flexibility.

What we believe is that it's important to communicate all available information back to the officer and the agency.

Mr. John Rafferty: If you were to talk about so many bracelets per person-day, is it possible to quantify that for us? In other words, alerts would go out and there would be an officer who would be responsible for 50 bracelets or 100 bracelets. How does that work?

Mr. Steve Chapin: There are two ways to set up a program. One, an officer can be responsible for monitoring all of his or her caseload. Typically, that would be 25 to 50 offenders, depending on the type of offender. The other way to do it is to have all alerts go to a monitoring centre. It could be an agency-based monitoring centre such as the Michigan Department of Corrections has, and they can clear those alerts. Or it could be a contracted monitoring centre, for example, 3M's monitoring centre, where we would process those alerts. It's also common to have a third-party monitoring centre.

● (1610)

Mr. John Rafferty: I guess I'm just trying to get an idea of how many person-hours are spent dealing with alerts. In other words, for example, for police forces or border services in Canada, if you're dealing with immigration, would there have to be considerable numbers of new hires to accommodate bracelets? Or is it your experience that existing personnel in a city, or whatever the case may be, can take care of dealing with the alerts?

Mr. Steve Chapin: You're asking me a question that's starting to get a little bit outside my area of expertise. I can tell you there are no false alerts. There are alerts that are more interesting than other alerts, for example, an alert where an offender has gone into a victim's exclusion zone. There might be an alert that is a “bracelet gone” alert, where an offender stepped away from his bracelet for a minute and then returned, and that alert clears up.

Mr. John Rafferty: Thank you.

I guess what I'm concerned about is this. You probably don't know that the Canadian government is thinking about border services, for example, and reducing the number of people who are available in border services across the country. If they're looking at a program like this, what sort of extra burden would that put on border services, if they're going to put bracelets on people who are immigrating to the country, for example?

Mr. Steve Chapin: I wish I could answer that, but that goes more to agency protocol. It would vary greatly, depending on how the protocol was set up.

Mr. John Rafferty: I have one more quick question. I think I have time.

The Chair: You have 30 seconds.

Mr. John Rafferty: In Canada we're fortunate to have a small population and a large land mass. The price that you talked about before was probably for a fairly dense area—Florida, California, perhaps—in terms of population and fairly easy monitoring. Would you see that price escalate considerably if we're talking about a large land base and a small population, and alerts going out where people have to cover a large area to deal with the alerts, if they're serious?

Mr. Steve Chapin: There are no additional costs from the technology perspective. If the agency decided that they needed more personnel, then of course, but it makes no difference from a technology perspective.

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

Ms. Hoeppner, please go ahead.

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

I will be sharing my time with Mr. Norlock.

I just want to clarify something that Mr. Rafferty said. He's incorrect. In fact, we have increased our border security by 26% under our government, which amounted to over 1,000 new border guards. Maybe what he is referring to is the fact that we're cutting some of the fat. For example, there's a $1 million slush fund of taxpayers' dollars that the union has been able to use, and we will be cutting that. But just for the record, I wanted to clear that up. Unfortunately, the opposition voted against all of those initiatives, but we did increase border guards by over 1,000 new border guards, which amounted to about a 26% increase.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Norlock, go ahead.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair

Through you to the witnesses, thank you for appearing today.

My questions are going to be based a little bit on what Mr. Rafferty.... I always ask questions that I think my constituents would ask. In other words, if I thought they were being confused, I would try to....

The distance doesn't matter because we're basically dealing with satellites or cellphones, so distances are irrelevant. It doesn't cost more because you're 50 miles away, or 150 miles away. The technology is still there, the same as a cellphone or a satellite receiver, because that GPS is run on satellite. Is that correct?

Mr. Steve Chapin: That's correct.

Mr. Rick Norlock: As far as additional personnel, really, what you'd be dealing with in Canada is people being released on a probation order or recognizance. I think it's the same in the United States; you may use different terminologies. So the probation officers, if they did not have a GPS or a monitoring device, would have no idea other than the word of a witness saying that the accused or the person charged is not in his or her residence. Tell me if I'm correct or not.

Mr. Steve Chapin: That's correct.

Mr. Rick Norlock: This device is an assist to the probation officer or the police department or the correctional facility in monitoring prisoners within a facility. I think you said you do that in the United States. I don't believe we do that in Canada, but we might.

Really, it isn't doing—

[*Technical difficulty—Editor*]

● (1610)

(Pause)

● (1615)

The Chair: All right. We'll call this meeting back to order. We're listening to 3M's testimony on electronic monitoring. Mr. Norlock, you have two minutes left for your questions.

Mr. Rick Norlock: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

My reference to time saving would be investigative time saving. Since 3M doesn't do the investigation, it saves the agency time to investigate, whereas you would provide accuracy. The accuracy is the time-saving device and assists the probation officer or police service or whoever in making sure that all the conditions are met, and the accuracy helps them determine how well the accused or the person attached to the device is behaving in accordance with the regulatory regime. That's what I was referring to.

Mr. Steve Chapin: I apologize. I misunderstood you. Yes, in that context.

Mr. Rick Norlock: There's absolutely no need for an apology, but investigations do take time. They all have a dollar value because you're paying people.

One of the concerns this committee had was to do with an urban setting, and the fact that the accused might be going into a subway or into an area where cellphones and GPS...in particular GPS, because cellphones now tend to work better in those confines because there are repeaters. Our concern was the dead zones. In other words, the areas that may pose a problem.

We were told by one of the tracking companies—one of your competitors, I suspect—that some of these issues are becoming less and less of a concern because of the addition of technology.

Do you see anything coming down the pipe? In other words, if an agency contracted 3M, is part of the contract that the technology can be worked into the product as it becomes more sophisticated? Could you précis the evolution?

● (1620)

Mr. Steve Chapin: The reason we prefer a lease model is that we can continually upgrade and improve our product. As an agency receives new units or replacement units, if the units wear out or if the offender has taken off—and we constantly ship the units—we always ship the latest technology unit.

To go back to your question about an offender entering a subway, GPS absolutely will not work in a subway. In fact, we expect the GPS won't work inside most buildings. Sometimes we get lucky, depending upon the structure of the building, and it does work. But with the technology we're using, we have supplemental terrestrial technology whereby we use cell towers. We don't triangulate, but we know the location of cell towers and we know the location of the nearest cell tower, or perhaps the cellphone repeater, which might be down in a subway. It is not as accurate as GPS, but it is supplemental information.

There are customers or other competitors who tout other tracking technologies, but most technologies are not as accurate as GPS.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Norlock.

I will now move back to the opposition.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rousseau, you have five minutes.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My first question is for Ms. Maheu, who hasn't spoken much.

You work in Government Affairs. I think I heard that there isn't a contract yet or that you do not yet do business with the Canadian government. Is the type of technology you promote ready-to-use technology? In other words, you claim to have the solution, you show people how it works, how it can be used to make room in overcrowded prisons. Basically, you show people how to manage offenders.

Could you, Ms. Maheu or Mr. Chapin, tell us more about this?

Mrs. Elise Maheu (Director, Government Affairs, 3M Company Canada): I am not an expert in technology, since I am responsible for Government Affairs. 3M Company Canada has 55,000 products. Usually, I ask people like Mr. Chapin to answer technical questions.

I will let him answer you, but I don't think we try to answer that type of question. It is more focused on the technical side. We try to find technical solutions for the requests we receive from government agencies.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Have you received requests from the Canadian government?

Mrs. Elise Maheu: No.

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Chapin: I would like to add that every technology I've talked about today and every capability I have talked about today is available immediately. It's currently in use.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Okay.

[*English*]

Mrs. Elise Maheu: That was to provide a solution with all services included and everything, if we come into a correctional agency, for example.

Mr. Steve Chapin: Yes, if an agency requested that we provide a full-service solution that included monitoring, perhaps installations, and tracking the equipment, as well as all of the technology I talked about, we currently do that for a number of agencies and would be fully prepared to do it here.

The only thing we would require—and we're very firm about this—is the protocols from the agency. We're not corrections people. We don't want to set protocols; we would have to have a list of those.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: That concerns me a bit. When you install a technology for clients, you adapt to their requests.

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Chapin: Yes, that's correct.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: I would like to know the history of this technology. I can't help but think of an old Schwarzenegger movie. The bracelet wasn't around the wrist or the foot, but around the neck. When the prisoner strayed or the neckpiece activated, it wasn't pretty.

I would like to know the history of this technology and where it is going. Is it heading toward implants?

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Chapin: Is it going to implants? I will tell you that the current trend of smaller, cheaper, lighter will continue. We've gone from four pounds to an intermediate device that I didn't bring, which is two pounds, to the one I have here, which weighs around 12 ounces. These will continue to get smaller and smaller until we reach the point—just as we have with cellphones—where it doesn't make any sense to make them smaller.

The problem with an implant device is.... There was a company in south Florida that was selling an implant device, but it was really a device that was an RF tag and required an RF sensor to be very close to it. The problem is that you can't change physics. We have a signal in space that we have to be able to receive. We have an issue with the battery. I'm not particularly anxious to have a lithium ion battery implanted inside of me. Then there is the propagation required for communication.

So while we're not there yet, could it get to implants? Time will tell.

● (1625)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Are there geographic or atmospheric environments in which your system is less effective or less appropriate? For example, in Quebec, there are still regions where cell phones and GPS are much less effective. Are there areas where this system would be much less effective?

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Chapin: The GPS is very consistent, except in examples that I've already cited—urban canyons and things like that.

Poor cellular coverage is just a fact of life in our business. We see it all the time in every country we operate in. But the operation of the cellular device and the operation of the GPS device are completely separate. If we're not able to communicate, we still continue to record a GPS point as normal and inform the offender of any violations as normal. We can store up to 30 days of points on this device, and whenever the device is able to communicate, it downloads all of that data and picks up any updates.

We also have the ability to equip—it's becoming less and less common—a unit in the house that has a regular, wired phone connection.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Has one of your clients ever had their surveillance system hacked? If so, how long does it take to alert the authorities, in such a case?

[*English*]

Mr. Steve Chapin: We've never been hacked.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: All right. Tell the Pentagon about that.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

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

Madam Young, do you have a question?

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): I do indeed.

Thank you so much for coming. It's very interesting and great to see that the technology is up to this level.

I was particularly interested when you mentioned the study done in Florida in 2011. Could you tell us a bit more about that and expand on it a bit? It talks about recidivism.

Mr. Steve Chapin: The study was conducted by a gentleman by the name of Bill Bales. I have access to a copy of that study and would be happy to send it, Mr. Chairman, to the committee, if you desire.

The study looked at 2,700 offenders in Florida who were being tracked by GPS, and there were about 1,000 offenders being tracked by RF, and then there was a population of offenders who were not being tracked with any electronic monitoring at all. The data that was made available was several years' worth of data—I'm sorry I don't remember how many years it was—which Dr. Bales went through to come up with his results.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chapin. Certainly, we would like to invite you to send that report to our committee, if you would.

Ms. Young, did you have any other questions?

Ms. Wai Young: Do I have more time?

The Chair: You have a little more time.

Ms. Wai Young: Might you expand on what the results of his study were, then, and how you think it can apply to Canada?

Mr. Steve Chapin: The purpose of his study was to determine whether electronic monitoring was effective or not effective. Efficacy was measured by outcomes. He wanted to determine whether there was recidivism—whether they successfully completed the program, committed another crime, or committed violations of their terms of probation.

He did a lot of statistical analysis that I can't, unfortunately, quote off the top of my head, but the end result was, he said, that there was a dramatic benefit, when electronic monitoring and specifically GPS was used, in reducing recidivism.

● (1630)

Ms. Wai Young: Do I have more time, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: You have another minute or two.

Ms. Wai Young: Great. Thank you.

A previous witness testified to us that sometimes this electronic monitoring had a tendency to make an offender's home a jail, and that this could have negative consequences, etc.

Based on the study and what you know about this whole issue, can you shed any light on that perspective?

Mr. Steve Chapin: I don't think I really know what he means by a jail, but electronic monitoring is intended to communicate the whereabouts of an offender. If it means that when an offender leaves his home when he is not supposed to leave home, his officer finds out about it immediately, then I suppose it could be construed somehow as a jail. But there are no bars. The offender can simply walk away and suffer the consequences from his probation officer.

Ms. Wai Young: Given that he has probationary orders, which this device is going to be technologically supporting, really he shouldn't be leaving his home anyway. Is that your point?

Mr. Steve Chapin: Yes. Typically the offenders on house arrest are allowed to be at home, go to work, go to treatment, and some period of time to handle personal affairs like grocery stores, things like that. Some of them aren't even afforded that.

House arrest is house arrest. They're supposed to stay at home unless they're allowed to be outside the home. The beauty of GPS is that when they're outside the home, you know where they're going.

Ms. Wai Young: What you're saying basically is that one cannot ascribe an offender's view on the GPS. It's simply a technological implement to help us monitor where they are and to support their conditions of house arrest.

Mr. Steve Chapin: That's correct.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Garrison.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you for your testimony, Mr. Chapin.

I sat through all the testimony here, and I believe we should have had you here earlier. It's been the most articulate explanation of the technology we've had, and maybe that explains why 3M bought your company, or why 3M is the most dominant.

I have two questions I want to ask you, not in any way to challenge your integrity or your company, but they're important questions for us.

Have you ever been compelled to appear in court to testify about the use of electronic monitoring devices, you or your company?

Mr. Steve Chapin: Yes. I have personally been in court defending the technology, if you will, and members of my staff routinely go to court to interpret points, if you will, most often in the case of a violation of parole hearing.

Mr. Randall Garrison: In terms of the questions you're asked in court, was the evidence upheld in all the cases you know of?

Mr. Steve Chapin: In all cases it has been upheld. In fact, on several occasions we've met the Daubert standard.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Okay.

My second question, have you or your company ever been sued in relation to malfunctioning, inefficiency, or bad reporting as a result of these devices?

Mr. Steve Chapin: In the roughly 15 years I have been involved with Pro Tech, now 3M, we had not been sued up until one year ago. This was the first case. It's an open case so I'm reluctant to talk too much about it, but we don't see it has much merit after reviewing the plaintiff's case.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Can you tell us who the plaintiff is, not name but category?

Mr. Steve Chapin: That part's public information. We had an offender who was wearing a passive tracking device—which is next-day reporting of his location—and he was out one night and he shot and killed the plaintiff. The plaintiff's point is that we should have prevented that crime.

Mr. Randall Garrison: That's useful information for us for our study, so thank you very much.

Mr. Steve Chapin: That's why I stated—and I state it all the time—that GPS will not prevent a crime.

The Chair: Thank you.

Thank you very much for appearing. As already stated, we very much appreciated your testimony. We would welcome that report, even if you send it electronically to the Chair. There might be an issue with translation, so send it to the clerk. We would appreciate it.

We will suspend momentarily to allow you to take your exit, and then we will go to committee business.

● (1630)

(Pause)

● (1635)

The Chair: I call this meeting back to order.

Before we really get into the meeting...yes.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: I'd like to move that we go in camera as we are dealing with future business.

The Chair: Okay. There are a couple of things that may not be future business, little budgetary things.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: I think budgetary things also would be in camera. I'm moving that we move in camera.

The Chair: The motion has been made.

Mr. Garrison, did you want to speak to that?

Mr. Randall Garrison: We did think there were some things in committee business that could be done in public, and this committee's had a rather better record than most of the parliamentary committees in this session for keeping itself open.

In particular, we're hoping we might be able to deal with my notice of motion dealing with BillC-38 topics that normally would have come to this committee, like the removal of the necessity for hearings for notification of parole.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: I don't think this is a debatable motion actually, moving to go in camera.

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. Andrew Bartholomew Chaplin): A motion to move in camera is not debatable. The question is put forthwith.

Ms. Candice Hoeppner: Yes.

The Chair: All right. Thank you very much for that.

The motion is—

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Chair, could we have a recorded vote?

The Chair: All right. Yes. The motion has been put to move in camera and there has been a request for a recorded vote.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 6; nays 4)

The Chair: We are moving in camera. I will suspend momentarily for us to go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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