



**Enerfin Energy Company of Canada Inc. and  
AltaLink Management Ltd.**

**Winnifred Wind Power Plant Connection Project**

**November 23, 2022**

**Alberta Utilities Commission**

Decision 26707-D01-2022

Enerfin Energy Company of Canada Inc. and AltaLink Management Ltd.

Winnifred Wind Power Plant Connection Project

Proceeding 26707

Applications 26707-A002 to 26707-A004

November 23, 2022

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The Commission may, no later than 60 days of the date of this decision and without notice, correct typographical, spelling and calculation errors and other similar types of errors and post the corrected decision on its website.

## **1 Decision summary**

1. In this decision, the Alberta Utilities Commission approves applications from Enerfin Energy Company of Canada Inc. and AltaLink Management Ltd. for the Winnifred Wind Power Plant connection project.

## **2 Introduction**

2. Enerfin has approval from the Commission to construct and operate a 122.32-megawatt (MW) wind power plant, designated as the Winnifred Wind Power Plant,<sup>1</sup> and the associated substation, designated as Holsom 1054S Substation.<sup>2</sup>

3. On June 28, 2021, the Commission approved the needs identification document application filed by the Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO), which proposed a single-circuit, 138-kilovolt (kV) transmission line to connect Enerfin's Holsom 1054S Substation to AltaLink's Bullshead 523S Substation and to upgrade the Bullshead 523S Substation.<sup>3</sup> As directed by the AESO, Enerfin and AltaLink filed facility applications requesting approval from the Commission to meet the identified need.

## **3 Background**

4. Enerfin initially applied for approval to construct and operate a new transmission line, designated as 498L, on July 21, 2021, with a proposed route primarily along Township Road 114 and Highway 3. Enerfin applied under the Market Participant Choice option, pursuant to Section 24.31 of the *Transmission Regulation*, and intends to transfer the transmission line to AltaLink once it is completed and energized.

5. The Commission issued a notice of applications and received statements of intent to participate from Cypress County and from landowners who own or occupy lands along Township Road 114 and Highway 3, who would later form a group identified as Cypress Landowners and Concerned Citizens (CLCC).

6. As the proceeding progressed, Enerfin was apprised of additional details regarding Cypress County's plans to upgrade Township Road 114. AltaLink, who would ultimately take over ownership and operation of the transmission line under the *Transmission Regulation*, also had concerns regarding the extent to which the project might be impacted by Cypress County's

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<sup>1</sup> Power Plant Approval 26504-D02-2022, Proceeding 26504, Application 26504-A001, February 4, 2022.

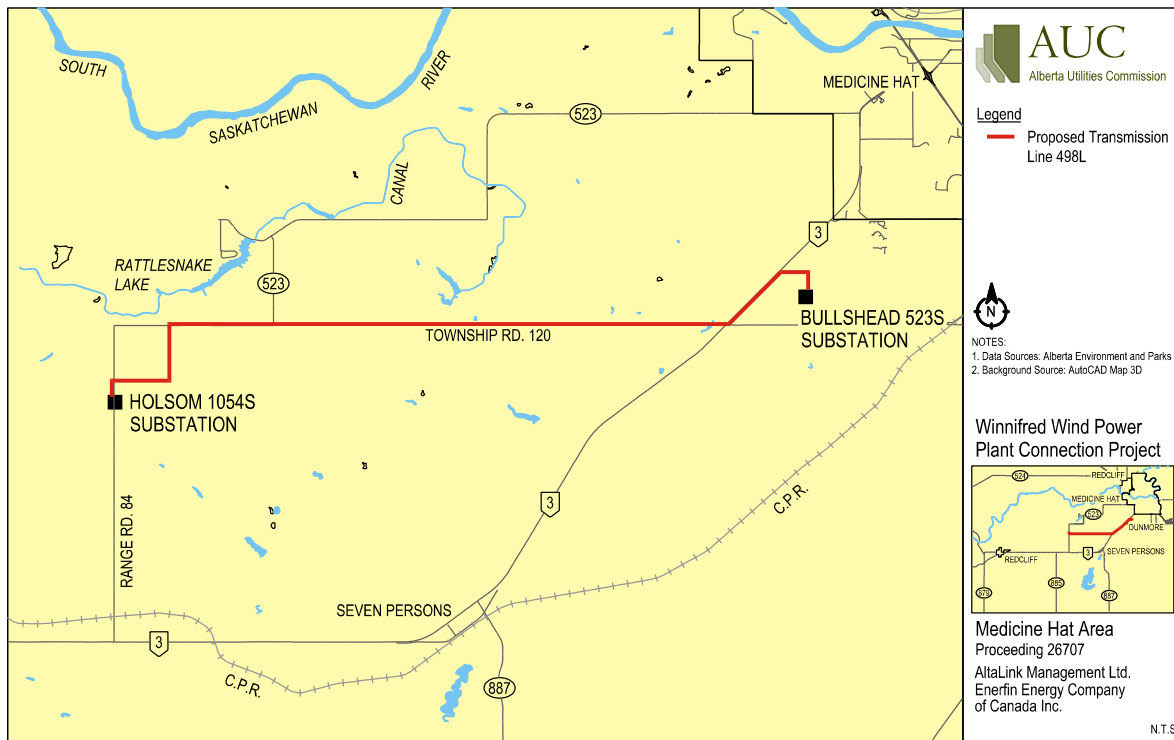
<sup>2</sup> Substation Permit and Licence 26504-D02-2022, Proceeding 26504, Application 26504-A002, February 4, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Needs Identification Document Approval 26620-D01-2021, Proceeding 26620, Application 26620-A001, June 28, 2021.

plans. On February 15, 2022, Enerfin requested the Commission adjourn the proceeding to allow it to undertake additional consultation with Cypress County and other stakeholders and to further develop route alternatives. The Commission granted Enerfin's request and adjourned the proceeding.

7. On May 27, 2022, Enerfin filed an amended application that proposed a new route, primarily along Highway 523, Township Road 120 and Highway 3, and withdrew its previously proposed route. Figure 1 shows Enerfin's amended route.

**Figure 1: Proposed Transmission Line 498L**



8. On June 14, 2022, the Commission issued a notice of amended applications in accordance with Rule 001: *Rules of Practice*. The Commission received additional statements of intent to participate and scheduled a hearing, which was scheduled to commence on October 18, 2022.

9. Subsequently, with the exception of the CLCC, Cypress County, Jayson and Jody Pancoast, and Keith Weiss, all remaining parties withdrew their statements of intent to participate. As such, Enerfin requested the Commission cancel the oral hearing. The CLCC supported Enerfin's request and Cypress County indicated that it did not intend to participate further in the proceeding. The Commission cancelled the oral hearing but allowed the remaining parties an opportunity to make final written submissions. No further submissions were received.

#### 4 Enerfin's facility application

10. After the proceeding was adjourned, Enerfin considered various routing alternatives, primarily along Township Road 114, Township Road 120 and Highway 3, and a combination thereof. This included variants on either side of Township Road 120, both within the road allowance and on private property, just outside the road allowance.
11. Enerfin ultimately proposed a single route (amended route) that used the Township Road 120/Highway 523 corridor instead of Township Road 114. As a result, the amended route would follow Highway 3 for a shorter distance than the route initially proposed but would still enter the Bullshead 523S Substation in the same manner.
12. Enerfin stated that its amended route received the strongest stakeholder support from landowners, agencies and government bodies. It also ranked the route as having the lowest expected visual impact as well as one with the lowest residential impacts. Enerfin identified that the route would have low agricultural impacts and a minimal impact on future road expansion projects.
13. Cypress County objected to Enerfin's initial proposed routing along Township Road 114 but confirmed that it was supportive of Enerfin's amended route. It stated that the transmission line being constructed four metres outside of the existing road allowance along Township Road 120 recognizes and accounts for the planned road upgrades.
14. The CLCC was primarily concerned with Enerfin's previously proposed route as its members are predominantly located along Township Road 114. While its members still object to the project overall, it submitted that the proposed Township Road 120 routing is the best routing for the project because it would have lower residential impacts and has greater stakeholder support compared to the previously proposed Township Road 114 route. It also stated that there was greater uncertainty around the Township Road 114 route, as the potential expansion to that road could push the transmission line into private property and result in negative impacts to irrigation infrastructure, businesses, and residences.
15. Val Felesky is a member of the CLCC who owns lands on the opposite side of Highway 3 from the proposed transmission line. V. Felesky raised concerns about visual impacts, health effects and effects to the environment.
16. The Commission also received statements of intent to participate from Jayson and Jody Pancoast and Keith Weiss, though neither party filed any further submissions beyond those initial statements.
17. Jayson and Jody Pancoast own land along the south side of Township Road 120, on the opposite side of the road from the proposed transmission line. The Pancoasts raised concerns about property value impact, visual impacts, health and safety, agricultural impacts and environmental effects.
18. Keith Weiss owns land near the Bullshead 523S Substation, immediately to the east of the proposed transmission line. K. Weiss expressed concerns about the proposed transmission line's impacts on safety and his permanent irrigation system. He also indicated that he preferred an initial route which accessed Bullshead 523S Substation directly from the west.

19. The proposed route of the transmission line is within the road allowance adjacent to the K. Weiss property and follows an existing distribution line that would be underbuilt on the new line. Enerfin stated that transmission structures located within road allowance will have no agricultural impacts.

20. The Commission's role in this proceeding is not to find a route that has no impacts, such a route does not exist; but instead to find a route that is in the public interest, which balances interests by recognizing the need for the development while trying to minimize the impacts to local stakeholders to the extent practicable.

21. The Commission recognizes that there are limited potential options for routing in this area. In its updated routing report, Enerfin explained that there are two major east/west corridors within the study area: Township Road 114 and Township Road 120. Cypress County has plans to upgrade and expand both roadways. Corridors to the north of Township Road 120 were not considered due to the setback requirements for Rattlesnake Lake, while corridors to the south of Township Road 114 were not considered because it would result in longer routes with higher overall costs and impacts. Further, the area features a large amount of irrigation, which means that routes within private property are likely to have significant agricultural impacts.

22. The Commission finds that Enerfin's proposed route is in the public interest. The route follows existing linear developments, including existing roads, distribution lines and quarter sections, for the majority of its route and is located within the road allowance for a significant portion of the route. The Commission considers that this will help to mitigate the impacts of the transmission line.

23. The Commission also places significant weight on the fact that the proposed route appears to have greater stakeholder support than other potential routes. In particular, the Commission considers Cypress County's support for the route to be a significant factor in its favour.

24. While the Commission acknowledges that interveners have raised concerns with the proposed route, the Commission is satisfied that the proposed route represents a low impact route and there is no evidence to suggest a superior route. The proposed route is located on the opposite side of Township Road 120 and Highway 3 from the Pancoasts and V. Felesky, respectively, and is located in a road allowance where there is an existing distribution line next to K. Weiss. Further, due to a watercourse, only the very southern portion of K. Weiss's property appears to be irrigated near the proposed transmission line. The Commission expects those locational factors to mitigate the impacts of the transmission line on these parties.

25. In regard to K. Weiss's preference for routing that would access Bullshead 523S Substation directly from the west, the Commission recognizes that the area around the substation is already congested by both overhead and underground utilities and there are limited possibilities to site a new transmission line. In its routing and siting report, Enerfin stated that it explored an option routing the line due west from the substation along the quarter section line but that landowners to the south of the quarter section line indicated that they were already heavily impacted by utility structures and would not be willing to provide a right-of-way for the line on their property. As such, the Commission accepts that the proposed access to Bullshead 523S Substation is the lowest impact routing.

26. The proposed route crosses a greater amount of native grasslands than other potential routes. Native grassland is rich in biodiversity, is important habitat for grassland birds, and is a threatened ecosystem. A large portion of the traversed native grassland area is adjacent to Township Road 120 and may ultimately be further impacted by Cypress County's plans to upgrade and expand the road. The Commission is satisfied with the measures proposed in Enerfin's environmental protection plan to mitigate impacts to native grasslands. Nonetheless, the Commission emphasizes the importance of native grasslands and of the proper implementation of mitigation measures by Enerfin to protect this ecosystem.

27. V. Felesky requested that Enerfin equip the transmission line with bird marking devices to decrease the risk of bird mortality. Wetland mapping in the project's environmental effects assessment identifies a seasonal marsh and a watercourse located on V. Felesky's land. Based on the wetland information provided there is potential for waterfowl in this location. The Commission encourages Enerfin to use bird markers on the conductor spans near V. Felesky's land to prevent potential bird strike mortality.

28. Enerfin stated that a clubroot management plan was not finalized yet; however, a site-specific plan will be drafted and will incorporate the best management practices itemized in the *Alberta Government's Clubroot Management Plan*. Enerfin stated that it would develop and implement the plan prior to the commencement of construction and include the plan in its environmental protection plan. The Commission imposes the following as a condition of approval:

- Enerfin Energy Company of Canada Inc. shall file a copy of its finalized environmental protection plan 30 days prior to the start of construction of the transmission line.

29. The Commission finds that the application filed by Enerfin complies with the information requirements prescribed in Rule 007: *Applications for Power Plants, Substations, Transmission Lines, Industrial System Designations, Hydro Developments and Gas Utility Pipelines*. Further, the application is consistent with the previously approved need and the requirements of the AESO functional specification.

30. The Commission is satisfied that Enerfin's participant involvement program meets the requirements of Rule 007. Enerfin conducted a participant involvement program prior to filing its application and updated it when it amended its application. It stated that the program was developed to ensure stakeholders had a clear understanding of the proposed project and that all concerns were identified, and where possible, resolved in a timely and collaborative manner. It included engagement with and notification to all landowners, occupants, residents, utilities, located adjacent to the project as well as municipal authorities and the public. In addition, Enerfin consulted with the Blood Tribe, Piikani Nation and Siksika Nation.

31. For the reasons outlined above, and subject to the specified condition, the Commission finds that approval of Enerfin's application is in the public interest having regard to the social, economic, and other effects of the project, including its effect on the environment, in accordance with Section 17 of the *Alberta Utilities Commission Act*.

## 5 AltaLink's facility applications

32. AltaLink applied to connect the existing Bullshead 523S Substation to proposed Transmission Line 498L and to upgrade the Bullshead 523S Substation to accommodate the proposed connection. No parties raised specific concerns with AltaLink's portion of the project.

33. The substation upgrade consists of the addition of a single 138-kV circuit breaker and will occur within the existing substation fenceline. Accordingly, the Commission does not anticipate that the upgrade will result in any significant effects to the environment.

34. The Commission finds that the facility applications filed by AltaLink comply with the information requirements prescribed in Rule 007. The facility applications are also consistent with the previously approved need and the requirements of the AESO functional specification.

35. AltaLink owns the land upon which the substation is located. AltaLink's participant involvement program included notifying stakeholders within 200 metres of the substation of the proposed alteration. It also consulted with government agencies and officials about the project. The Commission is satisfied that AltaLink's participant involvement program meets the requirements of Rule 007.

36. Based on the foregoing, the Commission considers AltaLink's applications to be in the public interest in accordance with Section 17 of the *Alberta Utilities Commission Act*.



## 6 Decision

37. The Commission approves Application 26707-A002, under sections 14, 15 and 19 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, and grants Enerfin Energy Company of Canada Inc. the following approval:

- Transmission Line Permit and Licence 26707-D02-2022, to construct and operate Transmission Line 498L (Appendix 1).

38. The Commission approves applications 26707-A003 and 26707-A004, under sections 14, 15, 18 and 19 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, and grants AltaLink Management Ltd. the following:

- Substation Permit and Licence 26707-D03-2022, to alter and operate Bullshead 523S Substation (Appendix 2).
- Connection Order 26707-D04-2022, to connect Transmission Line 498L to Bullshead 523S Substation (Appendix 3).

39. The appendices will be distributed separately.

Dated on November 23, 2022.

### Alberta Utilities Commission

*(original signed by)*

Vera Slawinski  
Panel Chair

*(original signed by)*

Merete Heggelund  
Acting Commission Member

**Appendix A – Summary of Commission conditions of approval in the decision**

This section is intended to provide a summary of all conditions of approval specified in the decision for the convenience of readers. Conditions that require subsequent filings with the Commission will be tracked as directions in the AUC's eFiling System. In the event of any difference between the conditions in this section and those in the main body of the decision, the wording in the main body of the decision shall prevail.

The following is a condition of Decision 26707-D01-2022 that requires a subsequent filing with the Commission and will be included as a condition of Transmission Line Permit and Licence 26707-D02-2022:

- Enerfin Energy Company of Canada Inc. shall file a copy of its finalized environmental protection plan 30 days prior to the start of construction of the transmission line.