



**ATCO Electric Ltd.**

**Barrhead Area Fibre Optic Project**

**April 11, 2023**

**Alberta Utilities Commission**

Decision 28116-D01-2023

ATCO Electric Ltd.

Barrhead Area Fibre Optic Project

Proceeding 28116

Application 28116-A001

April 11, 2023

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Eau Claire Tower

1400, 600 Third Avenue S.W.

Calgary, Alberta T2P 0G5

Telephone: 310-4AUC (310-4282) in Alberta

1-833-511-4AUC (1-833-511-4282) outside Alberta

Email: [info@auc.ab.ca](mailto:info@auc.ab.ca)

Website: [www.auc.ab.ca](http://www.auc.ab.ca)

The Commission may, no later than 60 days from 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 an application from ATCO Electric Ltd. to construct and operate a fibre optic telecommunications cable as the Barrhead Area Fibre Optic Project, designated as ELADFO018.

## **2 Introduction**

2. ATCO applied to construct and operate an approximately 2.3-kilometre underground fibre optic cable, designated as ELADFO018, between AltaLink Management Ltd.'s existing Barrhead 9069 Telecommunication Tower and Alberta PowerLine General Partner Ltd.'s existing Transmission Line 12L41, in the Barrhead area. This creates an interconnection between two existing communication facilities to enhance the telecommunications network and augment ATCO's capacity to manage services during planned and unplanned outages, and emergencies.

3. This initiative is part of the SOC2 Strategic Fibre Project, which aims to extend the fibre network and establish a high-capacity communication backbone connecting the Fort McMurray region with ATCO system operations centres. The overall project increases communication capacity, integrates with AltaLink, introduces regional route diversity in the north-central portion of ATCO's communications network, and ultimately improves overall system resilience. ATCO provided the cost estimate for the SOC2 Strategic Fibre Project in Proceeding 27062: ATCO Electric Transmission 2023-2025 General Tariff Application, under consideration by the Commission.<sup>1</sup>

4. Construction of the Barrhead Area Fibre Optic Project is scheduled to commence in fall 2023 and the targeted in-service date is December 31, 2023.

## **3 Findings**

5. For the reasons outlined below, the Commission finds that approval of the proposed project is in the public interest having regard to the social, economic, and other effects of the project, including its effect on the environment.

6. The Commission has determined that the information requirements specified in Rule 007: *Applications for Power Plants, Substations, Transmission Lines, Industrial System Designations, Hydro Developments and Gas Utility Pipelines* have been met.

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<sup>1</sup> Exhibit 27062-X0196, 2-1 to 2-22 - TCM Business Cases, Proceeding 27062, PDF page 723.

7. ATCO notified and consulted with landholders, agencies, industries, and other potentially interested parties directly affected and directly adjacent of the proposed route right-of-way. ATCO's consultation program did not include Indigenous consultation as there was no known potential impact on Indigenous rights and traditional uses. ATCO did not receive any objection from any stakeholders. The Commission accepts ATCO's assertion that there will be no impacts on directly adjacent stakeholders, given that the project would be located underground and predominantly within or adjacent to existing transmission line right-of-way or highway road allowance. The Commission finds that the participant involvement program for the proposed project meets the requirements of Rule 007.

8. The Commission agrees that the construction's effect on wildlife is expected to be minimal since the project site is situated near a provincial highway and no additional vegetation clearance is necessary. ATCO has affirmed that it will conduct a pre-construction survey of the wildlife in the area and build and maintain the proposed infrastructure while complying with all relevant environmental rules and regulations, as well as the conditions specified in the right-of-way agreements and easements.

9. ATCO prepared an environmental protection plan which describes the mitigation measures to be employed. ATCO committed to implementing all mitigation measures outlined in the environmental protection plan. The Commission concludes that the project's environmental impact is minimal. The project works will be located underground and predominantly within or adjacent to existing transmission line right-of-way or highway road allowance.

10. Based on the foregoing, the Commission considers the application to be in the public interest in accordance with Section 17 of the *Alberta Utilities Commission Act*.

#### 4 Decision

11. The Commission approves Application 28116-A001, under sections 14, 15 and 18 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, and grants ATCO Electric Ltd. the following approvals set out in appendices to this decision:

- Telecommunications Facilities Permit and Licence 28116-D02-2023, to construct and operate Fibre Optic Cable ELADFO018 (Appendix 1).
- Connection Order 28116-D03-2023, to connect Fibre Optic Cable ELADFO018 to AltaLink Management Ltd.'s Barrhead 9069 Telecommunication Tower and Alberta PowerLine General Partner Ltd.'s Transmission Line 12L41 (Appendix 2).

12. The appendices will be distributed separately.

Dated on April 11, 2023.

#### Alberta Utilities Commission

*(original signed by)*

Matthew Oliver, CD  
Commission Member