



AltaLink Management Ltd.

ENGIE Buffalo Trail North Wind Connection Project

August 3, 2023

Alberta Utilities Commission

Decision 27290-D01-2023

AltaLink Management Ltd.

ENGIE Buffalo Trail North Wind Connection Project

Proceeding 27290

Applications 27290-A001 to 27290-A003

August 3, 2023

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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 the facility applications from AltaLink Management Ltd. for a new transmission development to connect ENGIE Development Canada GP Inc.'s Buffalo Trail North Wind Power Project to the Alberta Interconnected Electric System. The connection applications are to construct and operate a new 240-kilovolt Transmission Line 983BL and alter Transmission Line 983L, including installing a fibre optic cable for communications.

2 Background and applications

2. On March 16, 2022, ENGIE Development Canada GP Inc. applied to construct and operate a 400-megawatt wind power plant, designated as the Buffalo Trail Wind Power Project (power plant), and the Buffalo Trail North 453S Substation (substation) in Cypress County. The applications were considered in Proceeding 27240.

3. ENGIE submitted a system access service request to the Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO) to connect the power plant to the Alberta Interconnected Electric System. The AESO determined a technical solution to meet the need consisting of a new 240-kilovolt (kV) transmission line connecting the substation to AltaLink's existing Transmission Line 983L. The Commission issued an approval¹ of the AESO's needs identification document checklist application on April 7, 2022, which proposed an in-service date of August 1, 2024.

4. On April 1, 2022, AltaLink filed applications 27290-A001 to 27290-A003 with the Commission for approval to construct and operate a 240-kV transmission line, designated as 983BL (the transmission line). The transmission line would originate at ENGIE's substation and connect to AltaLink's existing Transmission Line 983L in a T-tap configuration. AltaLink would also install approximately 395 metres of underground fibre optic cable from Transmission Line 983L to the substation.

5. AltaLink stated that the transmission line would be approximately 215 metres in length. The proposed route is located in the same quarter section as the substation. AltaLink proposed an in-service date of August 1, 2024.

6. On April 22, 2022, the Alberta Utilities Commission placed Proceeding 27290 in abeyance because a decision on ENGIE Development Canada GP Inc.'s power plant and substation had not yet been made in Proceeding 27240.

¹ Needs Identification Document Approval 27283-D01-2022, Proceeding 27283, Application 27283-A001, April 7, 2022.

7. On February 8, 2023, the Commission approved the power plant and substation applications in Decision 27240-D01-2023,² which stipulated a deadline to complete construction by March 31, 2025.

8. At the request of AltaLink, the Commission continued to hold the transmission development applications in abeyance as it and ENGIE were consulting with the AESO who identified the potential for congestion in the area where ENGIE's power plant is to be constructed. On March 31, 2023, ENGIE submitted a statement of intent to participate and a supporting letter requesting that the proceeding continue to be held in abeyance.

9. In an update letter on May 19, 2023, ENGIE explained that based on its discussions with the AESO, the power plant would likely be curtailed should it construct and operate the power plant by March 31, 2025. Therefore, ENGIE applied to the AESO to change the in-service date of the power plant to January 15, 2028, to align with when it believes there would be available transmission capacity.³ Further, ENGIE stated it would apply for a time extension for the power plant and substation at a later date. Lastly, ENGIE and AltaLink requested that the proceeding be resumed.

10. The Commission resumed consideration of the proceeding on June 26, 2023, when it received confirmation from ENGIE that the AESO approved an in-service date of January 15, 2028.

11. Given the change in proposed in-service date, AltaLink confirmed that it had revised the schedule to begin construction on March 1, 2027. Further, AltaLink would initiate preconstruction activities such as engineering work, procurement of materials and preparation of construction contracts by March 2025 to support this date.

3 Findings

12. For the reasons that follow, the Commission finds that approval of the proposed transmission project is in the public interest having regard to the social, economic, and other effects of the proposed facilities, including their effect on the environment.

13. Based on the nature of the applications, and AltaLink's statement that no concerns about the proposed transmission project were raised, a notice of applications was not issued and a hearing was not required as the Commission considered that its decision or approval would not directly and adversely affect the rights of a person under Section 9 of the *Alberta Utilities Commission Act*.

14. The Commission finds that AltaLink's applications comply with the information requirements set out in Rule 007: *Applications for Power Plants, Substations, Transmission Lines, Industrial System Designations, Hydro Developments and Gas Utility Pipelines*. The Commission also finds that the proposed transmission project is consistent with meeting the approved need and the requirements of the AESO's functional specification. AltaLink notified

² Decision 27240-D01-2023: ENGIE Development Canada GP Inc. - Buffalo Trail Wind Power Project, Proceeding 27240, Applications 27240-A001 to 27240-A003, February 8, 2023.

³ Exhibit 27290-X0044, ENGIE Letter to AUC re Update - May 19 2023, PDF page 2.

landowners within 800 metres of the project and received no concerns. The Commission is satisfied that AltaLink's participant involvement program meets the requirements of Rule 007.

15. AltaLink submitted an environmental evaluation, an environmental protection plan and confirmation that Alberta Environment and Protected Areas⁴ has reviewed the project and has no concerns as long as construction occurs outside the nesting season and after the fledglings have dispersed if ferruginous hawks are identified nesting within 1,000 metres of the project footprint.

16. While the timing of construction has changed with the delay to the in-service date, the Commission expects that AltaLink will ensure that construction occurs outside the nesting season and after the fledglings have dispersed if ferruginous hawks are identified nesting within 1,000 metres of the project footprint. The Commission accepts the conclusion of the environmental evaluation, which predicts that environmental effects will not be significant.

17. The Commission notes that it is not common to approve a small transmission development with an in-service date so far in the future. However, the Commission finds that given there is limited transmission capacity in the area, and that the AESO has approved an in-service date of January 15, 2028, approval is in the public interest.

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

4 Decision

19. Pursuant to sections 14, 15, 18 and 19 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, the Commission approves the applications and grants AltaLink Management Ltd. the following approvals set out in appendixes to this decision:

- Transmission Line Permit and Licence 27290-D02-2023, to construct and operate Transmission Line 983BL (Appendix 1).
- Transmission Line Permit and Licence 27290-D03-2023, to alter Transmission Line 983L (Appendix 2).
- Connection Order 27290-D04-2023, to connect Transmission Line 983BL to ENGIE Development Canada GP Inc.'s proposed Buffalo Trail North 453S Substation (Appendix 3).
- Telecommunications Permit and Licence 27290-D05-2023, to construct and operate an underground fibre optic cable between Transmission Line 983BL and ENGIE Development Canada GP Inc.'s proposed Buffalo Trail North 453S Substation (Appendix 4).

20. The appendixes will be distributed separately.

⁴ When the application was filed it was Alberta Environment and Parks.

Dated on August 3, 2023.

Alberta Utilities Commission

(original signed by)

Douglas A. Larder, KC
Vice-Chair