



ATCO Electric Ltd.

Touchwood Telecommunications Tower Connection Project

October 6, 2023

Alberta Utilities Commission

Decision 28442-D01-2023

ATCO Electric Ltd.

Touchwood Telecommunications Tower Connection Project

Proceeding 28442

Applications 28442-A002 and 28442-A003

October 6, 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 applications from ATCO Electric Ltd. to decommission and salvage the Touchwood Microwave Power Plant, and to alter the Touchwood Telecommunications Tower Site by connecting it to the Alberta Interconnected Electric System (AIES), approximately 37 kilometres northwest of Lac La Biche, Alberta.

2 Applications

2. ATCO Electric, under Approval U2012-71,¹ is the operator of Touchwood Microwave Power Plant, located in the east half of Section 29, Township 68, Range 9, west of the Fourth Meridian.

3. The 60-kilowatt (kW) power plant, which consists of two diesel-fired generating units, supplies power to the Touchwood Telecommunications Tower that is located at the same site. ATCO Electric stated that it retains a Crown disposition for this site, which is surrounded by forested Crown land.

4. ATCO Electric filed an application with the Commission under Section 21 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, for approval to decommission and salvage the power plant. The project consists of decommissioning and salvaging the existing 35-kW, diesel-powered generator (CUL 443) and re-purposing the existing 25-kW diesel-powered generator (CUL 435)² as a backup generator for the telecommunications tower site. ATCO Electric also sought approval under Section 19 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, to alter the Touchwood Telecommunications Tower Site by connecting it to the AIES via a distribution interconnection. The targeted completion date for the project is December 2023.

5. ATCO Electric explained that in the 2020-2022 General Tariff Application it applied to convert the power plant to a renewable hybrid plant, but the Commission approved the alternative option to connect the Touchwood Telecommunications Tower Site to the AIES via a distribution interconnection.³

6. ATCO Electric requested a permit and licence for the Touchwood Telecommunications Tower Site. It does not currently have one given the site was originally constructed in 1986.

¹ Power Plant Approval U2012-71, Proceeding 1733, Application 1608175, February 24, 2012.

² Exhibit 28442-X0014, ATCO-AUC-IR Responses to AUC-20230915, PDF page 2.

³ Decision 24964-D02-2021: ATCO Electric Ltd. – 2020-2022 Transmission General Tariff Application, Proceeding 24964, March 19, 2021.

The major equipment will consist of the existing telecommunications tower and the re-purposed 25-kW backup generator.

7. Due to the nature of the applications, a notice of application was not issued and a hearing was not required, as the Commission considered that its decision or order would not directly and adversely affect the rights of a person, pursuant to Section 9 of the *Alberta Utilities Commission Act*.

3 Findings

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. ATCO Electric notified all potentially affected agencies, industries, private landholders, and the local municipality. ATCO Electric stated that it did not receive any objections from stakeholders in response to the project information package that was distributed. The Commission finds that the participant involvement program for the proposed project meets the requirements of Rule 007.

11. The Commission considers that the decommission and salvage of the power plant is warranted because the power plant is no longer needed since the Touchwood Telecommunications Tower Site will be connected to the AIES.

12. The Commission finds that the environmental impacts of the project are expected to be minimal since no vegetation clearing or ground disturbance will be required. The generating unit will be removed from an existing building, which will remain in place, and the telecommunications tower and back up generator will remain in their current locations within the existing fenced area. The Commission is satisfied that final site remediation and reclamation are not necessary at this time, as the site will remain active as a telecommunications facility. As well, ATCO stated that the temporary project noise will comply with Rule 012: *Noise Control*.

13. 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*.

14. Also, although ATCO applied under Section 21 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, the Commission considers that Section 22 of the act is applicable in this case given that the Touchwood Microwave Power Plant does not contain isolated generating units within the meaning of the *Electric Utilities Act*.⁴

⁴ Proceeding 24964, Exhibit 24964-X0185.07, AET Responses to AUC November Information Requests, AET-AUC-2019NOV25-066.

4 Decision

15. The Commission approves Application 28442-A002 and Application 28442-A003, under sections 14, 15, 19 and 22 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, and grants ATCO Electric Ltd. the following approvals set out in the appendixes to this decision:

- Decommission and Salvage Approval 28442-D02-2023, to decommission and salvage the Touchwood Microwave Power Plant (Appendix 1).
- Permit and Licence 28442-D03-2023, to alter the Touchwood Telecommunications Tower Site (Appendix 2).

16. The appendixes will be distributed separately.

Dated on October 6, 2023.

Alberta Utilities Commission

(original signed by)

Michael Arthur
Commission Member