



ATCO Electric Ltd.

Thornton Fibre Optic Connection Project

May 1, 2025

Alberta Utilities Commission

Decision 29957-D01-2025

ATCO Electric Ltd.

Thornton Fibre Optic Connection Project

Proceeding 29957

Application 29957-A001

May 1, 2025

Published by the:

Alberta Utilities Commission

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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 application from ATCO Electric Ltd. to construct and operate a fibre optic cable, designated as ELADFO027.

2 Introduction

2. ATCO Electric Ltd. applied to the AUC for approval to construct and operate approximately 5.3 kilometres of overhead and buried fibre optic cable, designated as ELADFO027, from ATCO's Thornton 2091S Substation to an existing fibre optic splice point owned by Canadian Fiber Optics Corp. The proposed project is located approximately 68 kilometres south of Grande Prairie, in the Municipal District of Greenview. The majority of the cable would be strung along existing distribution structures.

3. The project will replace the existing microwave radio links between the Smoky River telecommunications tower and Thornton 2091S Substation. ATCO stated that the existing microwave radio links are at their end of life and would normally require microwave radio replacement to meet the current needs of the system. A review of the current system identified an opportunity to leverage existing fibre optic cable from a third-party service provider located near Highway 40. Use of this fibre optic cable eliminates the need to upgrade the microwave radio system. The project is a subset of the Grande Prairie – Grande Cache Fibre Project, which will be included in ATCO's upcoming 2026-2027 General Tariff Application.

4. Construction of the Thornton Fibre Optic Connection Project is scheduled to commence in fall 2025, and the targeted in-service date is March 31, 2026. ATCO estimated the cost of the project to be approximately \$0.5 million.

5. Due to the nature of this application, the Commission concluded that its decision would not directly and adversely affect the rights of a person pursuant to Section 9(2) of the *Alberta Utilities Commission Act*, and so no notice of application was required.

3 Findings

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. ATCO notified and consulted with public stakeholders, regional municipality agencies, government departments, and other potentially and adversely affected parties directly adjacent to the proposed right-of-way. ATCO's participant involvement program did not include Indigenous consultation as there is no known potential impact on Indigenous rights and traditional uses. Further, the Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Consultation Office advised ATCO that no consultation was required. 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 within existing transmission line, distribution line and a mix of proposed and new access road rights-of-way. The Commission finds that the participant involvement program for the proposed project meets the requirements of Rule 007.

9. ATCO prepared an environmental protection plan, which described the mitigation measures to be employed. ATCO committed to implementing all mitigation measures outlined in the environmental protection plan. The Commission finds that the project's environmental impact will be minimal given that the cable will be located underground, along pre-disturbed land below an existing electric facility, and next to a road, and that mitigation measures will be implemented.

10. The Commission agrees no significant adverse environmental effects are expected including the potential for residual effects to land use, surface water and wetlands, soil and terrain, vegetation, and wildlife.

11. 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

12. The Commission approves the application, under sections 14, 15 and 18 of the *Hydro and Electric Energy Act*, and grants ATCO Electric Ltd. the following approvals set out in appendixes to this decision:

- Telecommunications Facilities Permit and Licence 29957-D02-2025, to construct and operate Fibre Optic Cable ELADFO027 (Appendix 1).
- Connection Order 29957-D03-2025, to connect Fibre Optic Cable ELADFO027 to Canadian Fiber Optics Corp.'s existing fibre optic system in the Municipal District of Greenview (Appendix 2).

13. The appendixes will be distributed separately.

Dated on May 1, 2025.

Alberta Utilities Commission

(original signed by)

Matthew Oliver, CD
Commission Member