

**AltaLink Management Ltd. (“AltaLink”)**

**Application No. 1607067  
Western Alberta Transmission Line  
Proceeding ID No. 1045**

**(the “Application”)**

**To the Alberta Utilities Commission**

**OPENING STATEMENT OF MR. DARIN WATSON, P.Eng.  
ON BEHALF OF ALTALINK**

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1. Good morning Chairman Grieve, Commissioners, Commission staff, and parties.
2. AltaLink owns more than half of Alberta's electric transmission system and serves 85% of Albertans. It is responsible for the maintenance and operation of approximately 12,000 kilometres of transmission lines and 280 substations in Alberta.
3. AltaLink has applied to the Alberta Utilities Commission for permits to construct, and licences to operate, four facility additions and associated modifications, which together form the Western Alberta Transmission Line or WATL.
  - First, a 500 kV AC / 500 kV DC Sunnybrook 510S Substation, located approximately 300 m north west of the existing Genesee E330P Substation;
  - Second, a 240 kV AC / 500 kV DC Crossings 511S Substation, located adjacent to the existing Langdon 102S Substation;
  - Third, a 500 kV DC transmission line (1325L), with an initial capacity of 1000 MW to be expandable to a minimum capacity of 2000 MW, connecting the 500 kV system at Genesee, west of Edmonton, to the new Crossings 511S Substation, east of Calgary (the "500 kV DC Line"); and
  - Fourth, a new 500kV AC Bennett 520S Substation, located on the quarter section directly south of the existing Langdon 102S Substation, and modification of existing equipment necessary for the WATL Project to interconnect to the Alberta Interconnected Electric System.
4. There have been no significant upgrades to the Edmonton-Calgary transmission path since 1982. WATL is designated as critical transmission infrastructure or CTI. The AESO, as the expert system planner, has certified that both routes described in the WATL Application meet the AESO Functional Specification and the AESO Supplementary Functional Specification.
5. AltaLink's Application presents routes which most effectively minimize or mitigate impacts based on consideration of input from consultation and a balancing of residential, agricultural, environmental, technical, visual and cost factors. The Application also includes a number of additional low-impact routing options for the Commission's consideration.
6. AltaLink's Preferred Route runs from the proposed Sunnybrook DC Converter Station near Genesee to the proposed Crossings DC Converter Station near Langdon. It parallels existing 240 kV lines for 211 km of its 347 km length or

approximately 61% of total line length. When compared to all other potential options, the Preferred Route most effectively minimizes or mitigates impacts because, among other reasons, it:

- has 18 privately owned residences within 150 m that would have the proposed transmission line closer than any existing 240 kV transmission line;
- parallels 211 km of existing 240 kV transmission lines resulting in less environmental and agricultural fragmentation;
- has low environmental impact; and
- crosses the least amount of cultivated land.

7. The Alternate Route is primarily a greenfield route. It is common with the Preferred Route to Town Lake. From Town Lake, the Alternate Route proceeds to the east and then south to Langdon. The Alternate Route is located to the east of Ponoka and Red Deer and is common with the Preferred Route for the segment south of Kathryn.

8. The Alternate Route most effectively minimizes or mitigates the most impacts of any route, other than the Preferred Route, because, among other reasons, it:

- has, over 349 km of line, 18 privately owned residences within 150 m that would have the proposed transmission line closer than any existing 240 kV transmission line;
- is located primarily along quarter lines;
- has the fewest number of residences within 800 m; and
- has less surface water.

9. AltaLink conducted an extensive participant involvement program for the WATL Project which involved comprehensive and ongoing consultation with stakeholders. AltaLink notified over 25,000 stakeholders, undertook personal consultation with almost 1500 stakeholders and had approximately 2900 attendees at open houses and community meetings. Moreover, AltaLink has successfully reached agreement with a number of landowners.

10. AltaLink is committed to environmental stewardship, and retained Stantec Inc. to undertake a detailed evaluation of environmental aspects of the Project including an assessment of vegetation, wildlife, aquatic resources, soils and terrain. AltaLink evaluated environmental factors when identifying and refining potential transmission line routes, and selected the Preferred and Alternate Routes and Route Options. Stakeholder input received during the route selection process and

preliminary tower placement allowed AltaLink to reduce the remaining environmental impacts. AltaLink is committed to using appropriate mitigations to manage any remaining environmental impacts of the Project.

11. AltaLink retained Exponent Inc. which concludes that the electrical environment of the proposed DC transmission line will not pose a threat to human, animal or plant health. Electric and magnetic field levels for the WATL Project will be lower than international guidelines for general public exposure at the right-of-way edge.
12. AltaLink retained Serecon Valuations Inc. to conduct studies respecting the potential effects of high voltage overhead lines on rural property values. The Serecon studies found that proximity to a high voltage transmission line does not affect the value of land used for agricultural purposes. In the case of rural residential properties, the decline on property values was small.
13. AltaLink has taken a comprehensive approach to the development of the WATL Project. AltaLink conducted an extensive participant involvement program which provided stakeholders with ample opportunity to understand the Project and its potential effects, and to provide input into the Project's design and location. AltaLink undertook a detailed route selection and refinement process that ensured all relevant factors were taken into account, including concerns and issues raised by stakeholders.
14. AltaLink made routing refinements which are set out in the Application and in AltaLink's updates of August 25, 2011, October 18, 2011 and April 5, 2012 filed with the Commission. For ease of reference, on June 4, 2012 AltaLink filed a consolidation of all route updates into one set of maps.
15. AltaLink seeks the requested permits and licences by December, 2012. If permits and licences are received by the last quarter of 2012, AltaLink anticipates that construction will start in the first or second quarter of 2013 and the WATL Project will be placed into service in April, 2015.
16. AltaLink performed a thorough assessment of potential routing options. AltaLink has presented both the Preferred and Alternate Routes and AltaLink considers that each are low impact routes that may be approved by this Commission. AltaLink also recognizes that this Commission will be presented with differing points of view. On a review of all of the evidence submitted in this proceeding, AltaLink remains of the view that the Preferred Route is the route with lowest overall impacts.
17. In conclusion, AltaLink thanks the Commission for the opportunity to present its Application and to the interveners for their input. AltaLink's Application will be addressed by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals. We look forward to discussing the Application with other parties and with the Commission.