

**BARRIERS – MYTH OR FACT?**  
**A Bit of Both**  
**Gloria Wilkinson, President of Winning Women, Calgary**

*Gloria was a Councillor and Deputy Reeve for the Municipal District of Rocky View, Alberta for three terms.*

Let me take you through the process, based on my personal experience – you will quickly see which is which.

How Did I Prepare

- Planned decision-making vs. rash, emotional decision
  1. my choice was to be close to home because:
    - I had a huge community support team through my volunteer work *(replaces the old-boys network)*
    - I was well known through my volunteer work and civic advocacy
    - The kids were still teenagers
    - Municipal politics is non-partisan, eliminating having to follow-the-leader

*(note: this is the same decision-making process to go through when looking at appointments)*

2. once I had thought this through we had a family conference. This thinking suited everyone as a stable home life was of ultimate importance.
3. I decided to add an extra step, since I have a competitive spirit. I went to college for their two-year business program specializing in government and finance. *(By the way – I learned to use that competitiveness in a constructive way. Starting when I was about 12, I would go the grain elevator where my Dad worked when I got home on the school bus. At first I just hung around then my Dad decided to put our minds to use. We formed our own two-person debating society.)*
4. By the luck of the draw – I was just finishing at Mount Royal College, when Winning Women was holding its first conference. I not only registered, I volunteered.

5. What I learned, I put to use in the municipal election that fall. I would say my timing was perfect. **Skills, network, family support, earned reputation!**

### Why Did I Run

1. Like many community/civic activists, I learned I had more to offer.
2. I also carried the female nurturing point of view – that my community had been good to our family through sports, schools, etc. and that I should “give something back”.
3. Additionally, because we live in a rural municipality next to Calgary, I could see and feel the huge pressures of this mammoth on our rural/trusting spirit. I wanted to make that if and when development happened it was going to be on our terms.
4. Politics, done right and for the right reason, was in my blood. My Dad and I had debated it. He went back to university, took government administration and became a town administrator- *what can I say?*

### Why I Thought I Was Qualified

1. For all the above reasons.
2. In addition, I want to focus on how well I knew my community i.e. my subject. I knew the hot topics around development, water, sewer, the environment, roads and taxes. I had studied how to manage these issues at college. *(This is the same kind of preparation that one must go through to present an effective lobby. It is sort of like a lawyer – you have prepared for your subject so well that you know the answers before you ask the question.)*
3. I was prepared to work hard to win – I had the “fire in the belly”.
4. I was prepared to work hard for all the people because they put me there and would be my bosses.

*I ran and won for two more three-year terms in municipal government.*

### Life After Politics

1. Plan for it – NO ONE should be a career politician – why? – no matter how hard you concentrate on remembering who your bosses are – you begin to think your own agenda is also important.
2. I chose to return to the volunteer sector – which I do full time. I use all my acquired skills in places like Chairing the board for the EPCOR performing arts center, sitting on the Senate for the U of C, volunteering in the backroom for a political party, etc.

3. One of my favorite volunteer positions is Chairing our Winning Women group. These women are my mentors, my peers, my friends, and my cheerleaders. That's why I'm here – to share these small-p political skills – SO YOU CAN GET IN ON THIS GEAT EXPERIENCE!