

Civil Litigation

# Women lawyers work harder to gain same level of respect

By AdvocateDaily.com Staff



In general, sexism is something women in the legal profession have learned to deal with on a day-to-day basis, Toronto civil litigator [Sarah O'Connor](#) tells *The Lawyers Weekly*.

For example, the attitudes, tone and words some use to describe female lawyers show that women aren't getting the same level of respect as their male colleagues, explains O'Connor, principal of [O'Connor Richardson Professional Corporation](#).

In one instance, O'Connor recalls, a paralegal referred to her in front of a judge in open court as "the pretty girl." She has also had a prospective client tell her he wouldn't retain her because he wanted to ask her out on a date.

In another situation, she says a client would only speak to a junior male lawyer in a meeting, rather than the female lawyers handling the file.

"It's more work on every little thing that can come up, so I'm prepared and over-prepared to deal with anything," says O'Connor.

"It's kind of like that Ginger Rogers quote," explains O'Connor, "where she had to do everything that Fred Astaire did, but only backwards and in heels. As a female lawyer, you're going to have to work harder to get the same level of respect."