

## **Melinda Ells Nurse Practitioner**

Prince Edward Island wasn't on Melinda Ells' radar when she started her job hunt after graduating from Dalhousie University as a nurse practitioner

But after five years here, the 34-year-old Advocate Harbour, NS native can't stop singing the Island's praises.

"It's very peaceful. It's calming; you get away from the business of a big city," she said. "The people here are very warm, the summers are great; you get the four seasons, and there is a really nice work-life balance."

As a nurse practitioner, Ells sees everyone from children to pregnant women to seniors in her practice at the Central Queens Family Health Centre in Hunter River. She shares the practice with five physicians at the central PEI location, and visits patients at other sites as well.

"Hunter River offers a wide variety of patients and patient issues," she said. "The people here are sweet; it's just like home for me."

Nurse practitioners (NPs) are registered nurses who have additional training to assess, diagnose and treat common, acute and chronic health conditions. They can order tests, prescribe treatments and medications, and make referrals to other health care professionals.

Ells said she's impressed with how the province has embraced the role of nurse practitioners, an important component of primary health care on the Island. Their additional education and experience enables nurse practitioners to function both independently and collaboratively with other health care providers.

"We are a valued part of the overall health care team," Ells said. "We collaborate on multidisciplinary teams along with physiotherapists, labs services, and anyone who integrates in one way or another with a nurse practitioner."

NPs have taken on a larger role in Island health care since the creation of primary care networks. A typical network has family physicians, a nurse practitioner, nurses, allied health professionals, and administrative support working together to assure that all Islanders are within 30 kilometers of a primary health centre site.