The federal government introduced the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act in Parliament today.

Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl says the bill will help safeguard drinking water in First Nations communities.

Strahl says the legislation would make it possible for the government, in collaboration with First Nations, to develop federal regulations that will provide a level of protection for drinking water in First Nations reserves that is comparable to other Canadian communities.
Ottawa has also announced two-year extension of the First Nations Water and Wastewater Action Plan, which will provide an additional $330 million over the next two years to continue to support First Nations in the provision of safe drinking water.

The government says that initiative includes the National Assessment of First Nations Water and Wastewater Systems, which will conclude later this year, will provide a more accurate account of water and wastewater needs in First Nation communities.

The government says it has made "significant progress" in improving water and wastewater conditions on reserves across the country.

It says, since 2006, the number of high-risk drinking water systems on reserves has been reduced from 193 to 49.

As well, Ottawa says 18 of the 21 First Nations communities which had been identified as priorities -- meaning that the community had both a high-risk drinking water system and a drinking water advisory -- have been removed from the list.