David Tilson MP ? Remember those with Lou Gehrig?s disease and their families during June

ALS, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease, is a devastating neurodegenerative disease that leaves its victims unable to control the movement of their own bodies.

This disease is responsible for the death of roughly two or three Canadians each day. It can affect anyone, men and women at any age regardless of race, although it is most commonly diagnosed sometime during middle to late adulthood.

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis works by killing nerve cells and, as a result, degeneration of the upper and lower motor neurons in the brain and spinal cord occurs. This causes those suffering from the disease to be trapped in a body in which the voluntary muscles no longer work. Thus, they can no longer initiate their own movements, although their sense and intellect remain very much intact. Many finally succumb to this terminal disease due to a lack of ability to breathe and swallow.

Altogether, roughly 2,500 to 3,000 Canadians suffer from this disease, with more diagnoses every single day. Due to Canada's aging population, it is predicted by the World Health Organization that by 2040, neurodegenerative diseases will surpass cancer as the second leading cause of death. ALS, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's will be at the forefront of diseases we, as a country, need to be fighting against.

Once diagnosed with ALS, this is a disease that affects the entire family as the costs ? physical, emotional and financial ? will be great. On average, 80 per cent of those living with ALS pass away after two to five years of fighting the disease, although the prognosis varies greatly by patient and can range from just a few months to upwards of the average by years.

This disease and the fight against it is one that hits very close to home for me, as my father passed away from ALS in 2005. Since my personal encounter with this terrible disease, I introduced a Private Member's Bill to have June officially designated as National ALS Month. Given the mysteries surrounding the causes and cure of ALS, it is my hope that the Bill will serve to raise awareness and support for the many ongoing ALS research initiatives.

Currently, there is no known cure for ALS, although Canada's ALS research and support community is world renowned. Since the month of June is ALS awareness month, it is a great time to get involved with things like ALS walks and supporting efforts to help fight the battle against this neurodegenerative disease. The Orangeville walk to support families affected by ALS will be taking place June 7. More information can be found about opportunities to support both ALS Canada and the various provincial societies by visiting www.als.ca.

There are so many ways for you to show your support, even if it is by doing something as simple as wearing the blue cornflower, the symbol of the fight against ALS. Together, I know that we, as a country, can support families and research so we can be closer to finding a cure