

COVID-19

NORTHERN ONTARIO 'UFO' was just junk from space

By STUART HUNTER

Northern Ontario residents got a bit of a scare Tuesday morning from what they thought was a UFO or falling star.

NORAD bases and radio stations were flooded with calls from residents who described a spectacular fireball shooting through the early morning sky.

It turned out to be space debris from the launch of a Russian satellite last month.

"People from all across the north called us to say they saw a fast moving, brightly-colored object at about 8:30 a.m. which they thought was a UFO," said Denis Ferlatte from Science North in Sudbury.

The science museum received more than a dozen calls from people from as far away as Echo Bay, Sault Ste. Marie

and Timmins who saw part of the platform from the Sept. 27 Molyna satellite launch burn upon re-entering the Earth's atmosphere.

NORAD bases in North Bay and Colorado Springs, Colo., reported receiving inquiries about the unusual display.

NORAD Maj. Dick Adam said there is no evidence the platform survived re-entry. He said it probably burned in the atmosphere.

"Almost every day or even twice a day, some sort of space debris re-enters the Earth's atmosphere. Almost 98% of the time they burn up in the atmosphere or they fall into ocean areas and are not seen by anyone," he said.

NORAD and the U.S. Space Command work closely together tracking space objects to make sure the debris isn't mistaken for incoming nuclear missiles.