

Criminal record suspensions plummet

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Applications for criminal record suspensions, formerly known as pardons, have plummeted since the Conservative government finalized tough new rules last spring.

Statistics released to The Canadian Press under the

federal access-to-information law show 15,871 applicants between March 2011 and this past December, down more than 40 per cent on an annualized basis compared to 2009-10.

A relatively small portion of those applications — 8,631 — even got through the door for processing by the Parole Board of Canada.

The board used to send back about 25 per cent of applica-

tions for various reasons.

The end result is a dramatic drop in the number of former convicts who are able to put their criminal past behind them and start anew.

The Parole Board says 3,693 record suspensions were granted from Mar. 13, 2012 — when the new rules kicked in — to Dec. 6. Compare that to more than 24,000 pardons granted in 2009-10.