



# Employee Stock Ownership Plan Acquires Casino Queen

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**East St. Louis, IL ...** Shareholders of Casino Queen, Inc., who own and operate the Casino Hotel & Casino located in East St. Louis, Ill., today announced its agreement to sell their interest in the company to a newly formed Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) for approximately \$170 million. An ESOP is a qualified retirement plan under federal law that allows employees to become official owners of their company. This acquisition includes the assumption and refinancing of approximately \$31 million in existing indebtedness.

The privately held ESOP will provide the Casino Queen's approximately 700 employees with an opportunity to benefit in its continued success and growth. The company stock will be held in a trust. All participating employees are beneficiaries of that trust. It will also effectively create an enhanced retirement benefits plan tied to the performance of the property and provide liquidity for employees when leaving or retiring from the company. The private nature of the ESOP permits management to focus on strategies for the long-term benefit of the company and creation of wealth for its employees.

The newly formed ESOP trust and the company will be led by the Casino Queen's General Manager Jeff Watson, who will also serve as the company's president and its Chief Financial Officer Robert Barrows. Both Watson and Barrows will serve as co-trustees of the ESOP trust and sit on the company's board of directors. The establishment of the ESOP will not change the Casino Queen's current management, guest services, operations, or business strategy.

"The leaders of the Casino Queen recognize that the best place to put the future of the company is in the hands of its very talented employees who have made it a success," said Watson. "Profits generated by the Casino Queen will now stay in the community and directly benefit our workforce. This further motivates our staff to take ownership of their positions and will continue to enhance guest experiences."

The negotiations on behalf of the shareholders and their board were handled by Jim Koman, one of the original owners who brought the Casino Queen to East St. Louis in 1993. GreatBanc Trust Company acted as the independent ESOP trustee during the acquisition process.

*Casino Queen, located at 200 South Front Street in East St. Louis, Ill., was established in 1993 and has since made more than \$10 million in charitable contributions and invested more than \$200 million in capital improvements on the East St. Louis riverfront. For the past six years, Casino Queen has been recognized for having the nation's highest slot payback among individual casinos by Casino Player Magazine. For more information, visit [www.casinoqueen.com](http://www.casinoqueen.com). You can also find Casino Queen on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).*