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September 24, 2007

Ms. Lynne Mazzeo

Tropicana Hotel
ATTN: Collections
P.O. Box 7246
Atlantic City, NJ 08401

Dear Ms. Mazzeo:

Hello. My name is Nelson Fabian. I am the executive director of the National Environmental Health Association. In my position, I am responsible for the management of all of our association's activities and programs. This responsibility includes the oversight of the expenses and financial obligations associated with those activities and programs.

As I write, one of the most significant financial issues on my agenda is the matter of the bill from the Tropicana for our recently completed annual conference. We have paid the majority of this bill. However, before any further actions take place relative to the remaining balance, I am compelled to present you with an argument that our payment should represent a final payment of the bill in full. I will shortly explain why I am arguing this position.

Before I get into that presentation, I want to set the stage for what follows by making a few simple observations.

1. Whenever I write a controversial letter, I almost always try to find a good side (to the issue) to acknowledge. (As we all know, most issues have two sides and I work very hard to see both sides before I stake out a position.) In this case, however, just finding a good side (to our conference experience at your hotel) let alone writing about it, is virtually impossible. Though we did enjoy working with various people at the hotel, on the whole we had a dreadful experience at the Tropicana. Therefore, even though a few positive observations *might* be possible, the overwhelming experience that we had with your hotel was negative. I'm afraid that spending any time trying to lace a few positive points into this letter would therefore only serve to confuse the issue. The bottom line is simply that we had a terrible conference experience at the Trop.
2. In twenty-five years of conference planning and management, this hotel experience was by far the worst that I have ever gone through. As you can imagine, my experience base covers many hotels in many cities and many management systems. I have never come away from any conference so thoroughly exasperated with a host hotel.

3. NEHA always pays its bills. That we are balking at paying the balance of this bill is therefore *highly* unusual. In and of itself, that should say something about our integrity and the case we are making.
4. We signed a contract with the Tropicana. Though the contract laid out many details over its many pages, in essence the contract memorialized a very simple agreement between my association and your hotel. For our part, we agreed to bring our conference to your hotel and to pay you for the rooms we would use and occupy, the food we would need and whatever else we would require from you for our conference. For your part, you agreed to support our conference with the appropriate set ups, VIP amenities, customer service, and overall logistics. In all honesty, we do not feel that the hotel lived up to either its contractual or even its ethical/professional obligations and responsibilities. At the risk of putting you on the defensive and hindering a good communication between us, I will nonetheless note that this isn't the same hotel that I signed a contract with. I felt I could count on "Jimmie Z". Since he left, things quickly went downhill. By the time of our conference, our worst fears were realized. Perhaps the best way for me to express my complete frustration with the hotel is by simply noting that I can't imagine ever bringing a conference back to this property or recommending your hotel to any of my association manager peers.
5. If I were speaking to you as a friend, colleague or business consultant and my aim was to give you advice on how you could make your property more successful, my advice would be simple. I would urge you to convert all of your meeting space (as quickly as possible) into casino space and to forget about even trying to be a convention hotel. (And by the way, I enjoy gaming and NEHA semi-regularly takes its annual conference to gaming properties. Therefore, I truly say this in the spirit of business advice without any moral concern about gaming.) As we saw and experienced your property, it just isn't able to support a conference – at least of our size.
6. In view of the experience that we had with your hotel, we would argue that there was a significant gap between what we expected (and what you promised) versus what we received. My job has been to quantify that gap in dollar terms and to then develop and present you with a rationale for that quantification. The remainder of my letter shall serve to present you with that rationale, as I will spend upwards of a dozen pages now detailing out for you the many problems that we experienced during our conference at the Trop. I submit that this shortfall in service and support should be worth between a quarter to a third of the hotel bill. To put this another way, it is our view that by paying you the \$75,000 that we already did, we believe we have paid you appropriately for what you provided.

We have come to this position after taking into account the experiences and viewpoints of our members, the Atlantic City Convention and Visitor's Bureau and our own conference planning company – which has had years of experience with countless hotels and clients, doing conferences of the kind we had at your hotel. If

you agree to our proposal that the bill can be settled for the \$75,000 we have already paid you, we will leave this matter a satisfied customer, content that the settlement was fair and equitable. Our viewpoint of the Trop will also then be that you are a fair hotel.

Now then, let me get to our argument.

What follows is a lengthy list of the specific problems we had with your hotel. We would argue that the sum of this list constitutes a compelling case for some type of an economic accommodation on your part. As you can easily determine by contacting previous hotels at which we've met, we have never protested a bill like this. Nor have I ever composed such a letter before. Again I would submit that this merely makes our case stronger. I have much better things to do than to be spending days researching and assembling a letter of this nature. I did this because we feel so strongly about our position.

To make this a little more organized, I will present you with our complaints and concerns by source starting with me. I consider me to be an important evaluator of the conference because I know hotels, I scout hotels, I sign contracts with hotels and more than anything else, this conference is my responsibility and I know more about it's many pieces than anyone else. Also, I judge a hotel's treatment of me to be a barometer of how our other guests are being treated. If a VIP can't be properly treated then I can only imagine how our other guests are being taken care of.

With that –

A. Experiences of Nelson Fabian

- Internet service
 - Throughout our entire conference, internet service was intermittent. We set up a very special internet service (we called it an "internet café") for our conference attendees. You can't imagine the frustration that we heard as over every single day of the conference, at various times internet service would go down. You must understand that when people are attending sessions, they only have a limited amount of time during which they can access their emails, etc. People would rush to our internet café to use the internet only to find out that the service was not available or worse, it would go down right when they were in the middle of writing out an e-mail to someone. We took a significant "hit" to our credibility for the awful service that we were providing to our members... thanks to the hotel. (As you might expect, most attendees just lumped NEHA together with the hotel meaning that we were as much to blame for the problem as the hotel. After all, the café' was a joint production between you and us.)
 - Like many others, I too suffered because of internet problems. When I am on site, managing an entire conference, the last thing that I have the time to do is to spend hours trying to access the internet to handle my emails and do the research that is necessary for the responsibilities that I have at the conference. The very first day that

I arrived, I had no internet service. After doing everything that I was capable of doing, I finally called the hotel for assistance. After spending some time with the hotel staff to no avail, I was given the telephone number to call for some form of technical assistance. That too, took awhile to get established, as I had to leave my number and then wait for someone to call me back. In all, I probably spent an hour and a half of my precious time working with first the hotel and then the technical support team to get logged on.

Once I was logged on, then for the remainder of my time in Atlantic City, I too suffered from the intermittent nature of the internet service. I would be working away composing what at times were long emails only to suddenly discover that the internet was down again. You can't imagine my frustration, to say nothing of the expense of losing all of my work. I came to count on the internet being out at least several times a day – which meant that altogether, I lost hours of work. Multiply that times the same number of hours that many of our guests lost as well and you have a significant price that we had to involuntarily pay because the hotel was unable to provide reliable internet service. This happened every single day of our conference.

- The frosting on the cake and the ultimate insult was that I along with our other attendees all still had to pay for the internet service. To tell you the truth, the nature and quality of the service was such that I thought that I was in a third world country. (Actually, I have had better service in other countries than what I had at the Tropicana.)
- VIP room service orders

On the last evening of my stay at the Tropicana and following our dinner banquet, I made arrangements to have a special service delivered to my room in order to entertain VIP guests of the association. I waited and waited (almost two hours in all) but no wine or food and cheese plates were ever delivered. In the meantime, I embarrassingly tried to explain to my VIP guests that I didn't know what had happened but I was hopeful that the delivery would soon take place. I called room service finally only to find out that the order had not been properly processed. Somehow or another there was confusion between catering and room service and as a result, nothing ever happened. And of course no one ever notified me so I was simply waiting and waiting to no avail. I finally just cancelled the order out of sheer frustration.

- Front Desk answering the phone

Also on the last night of my conference, I wanted to talk to someone at the front desk about certain arrangements for the following day. I called the front desk at 12:35 AM. The phone just rang and rang. Several times while this was going on, an operator would come on the line after a certain number of rings to ask if my call had yet been connected. I said no. She said she would continue to ring. I let the phone ring one hundred (100) times before I finally gave up. Then I slammed the phone down, got dressed and went down stairs myself to talk to the front desk. Interestingly, I was able to walk right up to a staff person as no one was tied

up on the phone. The indifferent answer I got from your staff was that the hotel was short staffed and wasn't able to handle all of the demands on it. Moreover, I was made to feel guilty for even asking as I was advised that I could be a bit more sympathetic to the overworked staff! This kind of "we'll serve you when we feel like it" attitude was not at all what was portrayed to me when I was in the process of deciding between the Trop and several other hotels that were initially vying for our business.

It was also interesting that the complaint we heard most from our attendees was the one about the Trop's indifferent and uncaring staff.

- Maid service eating room service orders

After the first couple of days, I quickly began to understand how room service worked and how hungry your staff was. When I first had the need for a room service order, I quickly ate what I had the time to eat because the room service order came late and I had to be on time for a morning appointment. As it turned out, I had forgotten a file and therefore had to go back to my room. I was stunned to say the least when I returned to my room to see that the maid service was sitting down at the table in my room and eating what remained of my room service order. That was embarrassing and made me immediately wonder about both the training of the hotel staff and the image that the hotel was seeking to portray to its guests through its staff.

- Room service trays in hallways for extended time

I was also very disappointed that throughout the conference, remains of room service orders that were put into the hallway by guests sat there for easily over 24 hours. In fact, this was so noticeable that beyond my own experiences, attendees would complain to me about this. Quite frankly, it made the hotel look like a dump, which reflected badly on us because that's not the type of property that we offer to our members for their annual conference experience.

- Indifferent and uncaring hotel staff

I can't talk about the indifference and rudeness of your staff enough. People were put through extended waits for check in, bell service, valet service, room service, and room cleaning. When someone did complain they were more often than not scolded or scorned – as I had been when I complained about the front desk not picking up the phone. Later I learned that but months before the conference the Trop had laid off some 1,000 employees. If that was true, little wonder that the hotel had such a difficult time keeping up with the demands that we placed on it.

All that aside, you have to know that your staff's treatment of our people severely hurt this association and our fortunes. The hotel and its personnel play such a crucial role in the ultimate success (or lack of it) that NEHA has. It is crucial that the hotel leave with its guests the feeling that they were indeed welcome and that the hotel would go to almost any length to take care of the needs of their guests. And indeed, that is what we typically experience

when we hold our annual conferences at Hyatts, Hiltons, Westins, Sheratons, Marriotts, etc. In no way, shape or form did we experience anything like this at the Tropicana.

I should add that we are a pretty easygoing group. Many of our members tend to be in lower paying jobs and we just don't expect to be treated like kings and queens. On the other hand, we don't expect to be treated like we are a nuisance. We have just never had so many complaints about hotel staff. That just doesn't happen in our conference evaluations.

It boggles my mind to think that a hotel that depends on good customer service could have so many of its employees have such negative interactions with our attendees. Many people wrote back to us after the conference to say that they would either never go to this hotel again or to Atlantic City again. Needless to say, that's not what we wanted to hear.

This isn't simply an observation or a gentle complaint. I want to emphasize that this is one of the more significant issues that I am complaining about. The fact of the matter is that NEHA is in major competition with a host of other associations for the membership and conference attendance of our people. It is therefore imperative and non-negotiable that we give our conference attendees a total quality experience. We want our attendees to look at the NEHA annual conference and say to both themselves as well as to their bosses and their colleagues that this is the conference to go to. We want them to say to others that NEHA always provides a first class hotel with friendly and caring service and high quality. If we get known for holding our conferences in dumps I can assure you that our attendees are going to go elsewhere when it comes time to selecting the conferences that they will attend. Accordingly, we put a high premium on the quality of the hotel and the caring attitude of its staff. This one issue is going to leave a very bad memory for many of our attendees and it will undoubtedly influence their conference selection decision in the future - which is not to our advantage. You may be satisfied with a staff that barely gets its job done but we aren't.

- Our VIP guests were not given the treatment that the hotel had promised

Long before our conference even began, we carefully went over with the hotel staff exactly who our VIP's were and what the arrangements on their behalf needed to be. All of these arrangements were consistent with the contractual obligations that the hotel had agreed to. In other words, we were not asking for anything beyond what the hotel had already agreed to in the contract that we had negotiated.

In addition to reviewing these arrangements long before the conference, they were also discussed at length in the pre-con meeting that we had on site with the hotel staff just before our conference began. In other words, there was no reason for any of us to think that our VIP guests would not get the rooms and the amenities that were assigned to them.

You can imagine our amazement then when several days into the conference, we began to discover that many of the VIPs that we had did not get either the room that they were assigned to or the amenity that had been promised.

What made this even more frustrating is that when we brought it to the hotel's attention, we were assured that this would be taken care of. It wasn't! Can you possibly imagine how embarrassed we were when we told our VIP's that they would get a special room and/or a special amenity and then they didn't? It wasn't the hotel that lost credibility, as you were an unknown to them. It was our association and us.

Let me explain why this is so important to us. Many of our VIP guests are actually project officers for grants that we receive. This is our only opportunity to really show them how much we appreciate their support. What you need to know is that their support amounts to quite literally hundreds of thousands of dollars for organization. To therefore come up short on something that we promised our VIPs undercuts our relationships with these people and puts our association at some jeopardy for being able to maintain the level of funding that we have enjoyed over the years.

In other words, this special treatment involved far more than a simple courtesy. (Nonetheless, even if that was all that this involved, we would still be complaining as you had no right to deny us the VIP rooms and amenities that you had contractually pledged to give to us.)

- Food and beverage

The food and beverage also left a lot to be desired. Apart from the quality of the food, which except for the closing banquet was awful, there were also problems with properly maintaining the food for the events that we had. Perhaps the best example is to refer back to the refreshments that we had in the exhibit hall. In essence, the hotel got it completely backwards. One of our refreshments was to be hot pretzels for everyone. The pretzels were there but they were cold and frozen.

Another of the refreshments was to be ice cream bars. The ice cream bars were there but they were soft and melted.

As such, few people ate the refreshments that we fully paid for. That left disappointed attendees and attendees who wondered how we could have planned this event so poorly. We had complaints but what was worse, we also had laughter. I say this was worse because by this time many of our attendees were beginning to conclude that the hotel and our conference planning was either a joke or show that was put on by amateurs. We were mortified by these reactions.

- Theft

We also had a theft at our conference that was disturbing. Per the hotel we thought we had a secure room in which to put the merchandise from our silent auction. It turns out that that room had a back door to it that made it accessible to hotel service staff. When we went into that room one morning to retrieve our merchandise we noticed that the room had been disturbed. And sure enough, we found missing from one of our boxes a brand new iPod. This theft should never have happened and we strongly suspect that hotel service staff were involved in it.

- Room set ups

We also had considerable difficulty getting our rooms set up as we had specified. It wasn't uncommon for my staff to be helping the hotel staff minutes before a room was scheduled for a meeting to help get the room set up as we needed.

This was much more than an inconvenience to us and a forced reassignment of work for our staff. In short, we were doing the work that we were ostensibly paying the hotel to do. To the detriment of the conference, we were also being pulled off the work that we needed to do so that we could at least get sessions going on time by helping to set them up.

In one instance, we had to have a room set up in a certain way in order that we could videotape that session. We sell those videotapes and make money off them. In fact, this is an important post conference source of revenue for our association.

As it turns out, we had at least one session that we had planned to tape that wasn't set up at all. When we noticed this, we went to work to get the room set up. However, we had to set it up so quickly that we couldn't set it up in a way that made taping possible. As a result, we had to scrub our plans to tape that important session. That meant that we lost money and the ability to provide that important education to others outside of our conference.

- Vermin

One of the most disgusting facets to the experience of having our conference at the Tropicana was the presence of cockroaches and bedbugs in the hotel. This again gets me back to the importance of the quality of the conference facility that we hold our conferences at.

On several different occasions guests reported cockroaches in the hotel both in meeting and sleeping rooms. As disgusting as that was however, it doesn't compare to the woman who ended up in a room with bedbugs. You will see from the attached picture the extent of her bites. I can honestly say in 25 years of doing conferences at major hotel facilities all around the country, I have never ever had a complaint before such as this.

- Maid service

Again, referring to the quality of service provided by the hotel staff, we had a number of complaints and this includes me, about rooms not being vacuumed or properly cleaned. We also had complaints (including me) about lights not working properly or something amiss.

- Room cleanliness

Speaking of room conditions, when I arrived I noticed as I walked across the tile floor that I almost lost my shoes – the floor was so sticky. I couldn't help but think to myself, if the hotel regarded me to be a VIP and yet put me in a room that had obviously not been cleaned up, then what in the world would be happening to our regular attendees.

Once I got my internet problem finally fixed, I then worked with the hotel to get somebody to come up and wash the floor. Even the housekeeping staff told me that they were surprised that this room was given to me in the condition that it was! In the meantime between my internet problems and getting my room in order, I lost a precious amount of time that quite frankly I needed to help me get ready for our conference.

- Serving glasses

It was interesting to notice from time to time that serving glasses that were put out for people to use during our meetings were not cleaned. Either they had been out for an extended period of time or the cleaning process just wasn't very good.

- Discrimination

I'm aware of one instance that appears to have involved racial discrimination. I was pulled aside by one of our African American members who shared with me that he was disappointed and hurt over a dining experience that he had had in one of your outlets. He explained that he arrived at a time when the customer load was light. Nonetheless, he was forced to wait an extended time before he could get his order placed. In fact, others who had come in after him were getting their orders processed while he waited. When he finally was able to put his order in, he found himself waiting until long after others had been served – whose orders had been placed after his.

You should know that I wouldn't be mentioning this if I didn't think that the story had merit. I also appreciate that such experiences can be subjective. However, I am mentioning this because the individual involved is a long time member of ours and his disposition has always been cheerful and positive. In all the years that I have known this man, I have never heard him say anything like this before. I therefore have little doubt that his experience was all that he said it was.

- Food at registration desk

Our staff who worked registration often placed food orders as this was the only way that they were able to eat during long stretches. It was disgusting that the food remains would be left out for hours. We just couldn't get anyone to come to take the food remains away.

- Room block

As we were doing well with our room pick up before the conference, we tried to get the hotel to expand our room block. They had plenty of rooms but the hotel wouldn't budge. There just wasn't any cooperation or any desire to render any assistance. The hotel certainly succeeded in sending a message that it really didn't care about our convention – when they had the prospect of getting more and more casino players in. This ties back into my business advice which was to convert the hotel into a casino only property – you would be better off and you wouldn't have to get complaint letters like this one.

B. Experiences through the eyes of our Members

Below are a number of the short answers that our attendees gave us when we asked them to evaluate their experience at the hotel. We have never had this many negative comments about our host hotel before.

- Staff in hotel and shops very rude – not friendly
- Tropicana had NO customer service orientation
- Valet service (Havana Tower) was rude and slow
- Tropicana was weak on amenities (no hairdryer, no safe, no coffee maker and there is a cord tying the iron to the ironing board – very awkward)
- Coffee maker in room would be a plus (many requests)
- Hotel is too geared towards the casino
- Hotel was poor for conference
- Room accommodations were not good
- Internet did not function at times
- Hotel is old and outdated, amenities in the room are very limited (no coffee maker, hair dryer, etc)
- Overall staff not friendly or helpful
- Had issues with registration and payment
- Cockroach in the room (North Tower) – several comments (more than 3)
- Cockroach in North Tower – food – blah
- Construction noises during meetings
- Cost of internet too high
- Bathroom and bed not entirely clean
- Spartan rooms and ridiculously expensive – expected free wi-fi at a conference site
- Hotel wasn't clean, too cool, uncomfortable
- Understaffed, too big, too many things did not work, staff unhappy/unmotivated
- Elevators were slow
- Rooms very cold
- Overall layout not good for conference – having to navigate multiple floors, towers, and a confusing sea of slot machines very much detracted from my experience
- Some minor problems – but not addressed by hotel
- It started poor in the West Tower – relocated to North Tower which was a big difference
- Temp was horrible (freezing)
- Check-in was a nightmare
- Bed uncomfortable
- Could hear adjacent speakers in next room – distracting
- Non-smoking room smelled like smoke
- This hotel is poorly kept, wastes energy, promotes the “instant money” quest that often takes advantage of the less fortunate. It is not consistent with our profession and promotes global warming and un-preparedness

- Difficult to control temp in rooms
- Pool was closed
- Hotel staff tended to be short and rude when asked a question
- Housekeeping spotty
- Carpet outside of room wet for entire stay
- Room not very clean
- My initial room was not very clean
- No free internet, no good work area in room
- West Tower room was poor – moved to Havana – good
- Staff not friendly
- The bed is in terrible shape
- Staff is not helpful or friendly
- Did not like to pay for internet and no-in-room coffee – also expected USA Today
- No special arrangement for NEHA participants
- Terrible experience – hotel lost my luggage, non-responsive for help, poor instructions/directions in building
- Rude hotel employees. I would not go to Atlantic City again
- I complained about lack of cleanliness; the bedspread had to be replaced because it was dirty
- In the 8 conferences (I attended) these were the worst accommodations, I will not return
- Valet rifled car, some of the hotel venues left much to be desired
- Hotel staff not very polite
- Had to change rooms due to non-working A/C --- tolerated 2 days without air conditioning!

C. Comments from NEHA's Board of Directors

1. From an officer: My main beef was the Affiliate President meeting. I previously asked for a projector with audio to be set up and left the lunch meeting a little early to make sure all was in place. When I got to the room nothing had started. We chased down the crew but I had to start the meeting at 1 PM sharp to respect the time constraints of the Affiliate Presidents. Meanwhile the electrical leads were still being taped down! More importantly, I had to rush through my slide show and had the hiccup with the video portion on one of the slides. With more adequate time to prepare, I would have probably seen the glitch and been able to have someone make the correction before starting the meeting.
2. From a board member: The air conditioning in the Havana Tower was not effective all week. It was noticeable as soon as one reached the Tower elevator lobby (increased humidity and temp). This was noticeable also in my room. I checked out of the hotel at the Havana Towers desk. I had been told by hotel personnel earlier that we could get a taxi from that location. Upon reaching the desk with luggage, the clerk on duty was very rude and indifferent to the need for us to get a cab. She offered no help, and as a result,

we carried all of our luggage (me - golf case, suitcase, 2 brief cases, other person – 2 suitcases, 2 briefcases and a garment bag!) all of the way through the Quarter, Casino and down to the main lobby. Similar requests for assistance from hotel personnel for information during the week were either met with indifference, ignorance or error. During the same encounter, the clerk could not explain to me the daily service charges in addition to taxes. One was for local phone service, which I did not use all week. The other was a location fee, which I think was duplicated elsewhere in the tax charges. This meant about a 15% premium on top of the room rate. The clerk actually sat and read a magazine while I tried to ask her about the charges and only got a response that it was mandatory and everyone paid it. As you probably know, we were paying about \$30 per day over rack rate for the weekdays.

3. From a board member – My wife was late into her pregnancy. Because of the limited flight service to Atlantic City, we were forced to come in early. I called the hotel to see if it would be possible to have an early check in. It wasn't so much that the hotel said no, this was not possible, it was the way in which they said it. It was as if I was crazy for even asking! After several tries and finally pulling the card that I was a board member, I at least got a we'll see what we can do. It was shocking to be treated with no care or concern whatsoever.
4. From a board member – When I arrived at the Tropicana, initially I was told that I had no reservation. Next, I was told that I already had checked in with someone named Susie. That could have been a bit uncomfortable, as my wife was standing next to me. Fortunately, she knows me better than that. Finally, I was told that there was another person with the same name (unusual name) registered at the hotel. I think that was highly unlikely. They did finally give me a small suite, but it was a smoking room. When I asked for a non-smoking room, I was told that I would then have to take a regular room, rather than a suite. My wife and I elected to take the suite and then had someone from housekeeping spray the room with a deodorant. We also went out and purchased our own room deodorizer. Regardless, the room still always had a smell of smoke residue. (Many complaints were received from people who had registered but whose records were either lost or in error.)
5. From a board member – Our room had not even basic amenities like a manual of information about restaurants, local sites, etc. Trying to get just a map of the hotel seemed to be an inconvenience for the concierge. A very bare room. No hair dryer, body lotion. It was a step or two below a Super 8. Early morning check out required us to go down to the desk at the other side of the hotel before 7 am so we could have a receipt. Not as bad as other's experience, but certainly not a recommendation to EVER return.
6. From a board member – When we tried to check in, they had no idea who I was. I mentioned NEHA and that didn't help. When we checked in to our room, there were plates and silver on the table in the parlor, but no food. (Member searched the room and discovered a refrigerator with a fruit plate). If I hadn't been nosy, we'd never have seen it. It seems they could have left a note to look in the refrigerator. Two light bulbs were burned out or cracked in the parlor. It took two cycles of the maids to get them replaced.

Several nights, the pillowcases were put on the pillows inside out. When we checked out there was a room service charge for the 15th (day before member arrived). This was removed. I helped rearrange furniture in the meeting rooms (when they weren't set up prior to meetings.)

7. From staff member - I was so frustrated when I checked in. The hotel absolutely insisted on taking a credit card imprint even when it was explained that those charges were to go on the master. The women that checked me in could not explain to me why, and after being in transit for 9 hours I didn't feel like arguing the point.
8. From a staff member – I asked for a copy of my room bill, which was not marked paid. When I checked out Friday morning, I asked the receptionist shouldn't my bill be marked paid or be noted that it is part of the NEHA master account? She could not give me an answer. Later.... Another note: The Tropicana charged me \$101.38 for my room (This also happened to another staff member who should have been on the master account)

D. Comments from Our Meeting Planning Company

A. Pre-Planning

- Total lack of response from sales and convention services during the planning phase, up to approximately 30 days out.
- General hotel policies and “knee jerk” reaction or inability to meet our requests
- No group reservation manager to assist with housing problems
- Lack of attention to our VIP Rooming list and staging guide

B. VIP/Housing

- The CEO's Summit Suite was dirty when he checked in. The floor was sticky, light bulbs were missing, lamp shade was broken, etc.
- The President was scheduled to have a Bi-Level suite but was informed that he had a regular room at check-in. Only because he persisted did they find the correct reservation.
- VIP 1 – told there was no reservation for him when he was on the VIP rooming list. Then he was given a room with a sofa only...no bed!
- VIP 2 – Did not receive an upgrade to a bi-level suite or an amenity
- VIP 3 – did not receive amenity
- VIP 4 – did not receive amenity. Hotel was informed and two days later, she still did not have it.
- Several speaker were to receive 1 night on the Master account but they were billed individually
- Meeting Planner – had wrong check-in date in the system

C. General

- The convention services manager refused to carry a walkie talkie so we could reach him
- The convention services manager refused to give us his cell number so we could reach him
- New ownership laid off 20% of convention staff thereby insuring many of our problems
- We repeatedly requested restrooms outside the ballroom be unlocked by 6:30 am and kept unlocked until registration closed that evening. Had to call every day to unlock in the am and again at 5 pm to unlock the doors
- Overflowing waste in ballroom foyer daily. Constantly called for clean up.
- Overflowing catering trays in ballroom foyer. Constantly called for clean up.
- In regards to the convention services supervisor (Herb)
 - Three times took it upon himself to move our sessions (after we published locations) rather than set a room that he decided should be used for STORAGE of all tings. By the 3rd time we demanded he set the correct room as published.
 - Was very surly with meeting planner staff when asked to correct or fix room setups
 - On 6/20, six breakouts scheduled for 8:30 am were still not set and were being set up at 8:15 am while people were waiting.
 - The video tape crew had to cancel one of their taping sessions (no time to set their equipment)
- Internet service was horrible at best. The service at the internet café went down continuously, every 2 hours for 5 days
- Continuous calls for assistance with the internet were ignored
- Union policies that made no sense for groups, such as removal of staff meals before we were ready to do so
- Airwall between two ballroom sections wouldn't close. There was spillover sound between sessions
- Not enough chairs in Havana Tower with all rooms in use. We were told they couldn't mix chairs from other towers when we suggested they get some there.
- Walkie talkies didn't work between towers. The hotel need repeaters
- Theft of exhibit prized from a locked room. The NEHA staff was informaed that the back of the house door was not lockable
- Lack of decent facilities for lunch when sessions brke in the North & South towers
- There was an obvious shortage of staff to meet our needs.

In general, we found the hotel totally lacking from a group perspective. Facility-wise, staff-wise, technology-wise, this hotel is not able to produce an acceptable meeting for a group our size. They continuously mentioned that we were probably too large for them. Why didn't they inform us in the beginning?

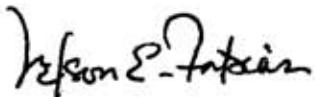
Conclusion:

I will say what I said when I started. I have never written a letter like this to a hotel following one of our conferences – and I have 25 such conferences under my belt. I would welcome you checking with previous hotels that we have used to see for yourself that we always leave on the best of terms. This time however, was a disaster. By virtue of your performance, we will now be spending the next year and probably then some, regaining the trust and respect of many of our members.

It is for all the reasons cited above that we seek to settle this bill by having you accept our check for \$75,000 – which under the circumstances we think is overly generous. We have also been in contact with the Atlantic City Convention Bureau to register our complaints there as well. It was heartening to hear their understanding and support. In fact, if this hotel could be run as well as the bureau, you would have a letter today that was as full of praise as this one was full of criticism.

We look forward to hearing back from you.

Respectfully submitted,



Nelson Fabian
NEHA Executive Director and CEO

CC:
Atlantic City Convention and Visitor's Bureau
Mr. Steve Marlin, President Prestige Accommodations