Nights spent trying to sleep while lying shoulder-to-shoulder on thin pads spread atop a cold floor will soon be over for the several hundred homeless people sheltered at the Dorothy Day Center in downtown St. Paul. On Dec. 21 — thanks to both private charity and government support — Higher Ground St. Paul, a $40 million emergency shelter and residence, will open adjacent to the outmoded existing facility.

By then, too — if the Legislature and Gov. Mark Dayton agree next week to a special session — the state funding that’s essential to the second phase of Dorothy Day’s modernization will be committed. The $60 million Opportunity Center and Dorothy Day Residence would stay on budget and on track for its scheduled completion in December 2018.

With it, Minnesota would have made a giant stride toward ending prolonged homelessness in this region. (Last year, Dorothy Day provided shelter for people from 56 of the state’s 87 counties.) The Opportunity Center would provide the counseling, job training and other services that can rebuild broken lives.

That’s one of many good reasons for legislators and the DFL governor to finally complete their 2016 work in a special session this month. The bonding bill that belongs on a special session agenda includes a $12 million contribution to Dorothy Day plus an opportunity for its parent organization, Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, to apply for a $15 million share of new housing finance bonds.

Much more is on the line. The most urgent reason for legislative action is the skyrocketing cost of health insurance in the state's individual market. Shoppers who don’t qualify for the federal tax credits available on the MNsure exchange are being hammered with premiums that are unaffordable for many. If lawmakers want to prevent a spike in the share of the state’s population that is uninsured, they need to act this month. Insurance premium bills are arriving now for 2017 coverage.

Considerable urgency can also be found in the bonding and tax bills left undone last spring. The impediments that kept them from crossing the finish line in May have now largely been removed.

The tax bill, offering what would have been $800 million in tax cuts through mid-2019 had it passed in May, won strong bipartisan support. But Dayton vetoed it because it contained a potentially costly drafting error. That mistake is easy to correct. And the case for providing the help that bill contains for farmers, small businesses, college loan debtors and low-income families is as strong or stronger today than it was seven months ago.

The bonding bill was stalled by a dispute over funding for Southwest Light Rail transit. That question has since been resolved — albeit in an undesirable way — by the Met Council and the Counties Transit Improvement Board. Another sore subject, the bonding bill’s inclusion of $300 million in cash for earmarked highway projects, appears to have given way to a plan to use trunk highway bonds for those projects instead.

What’s left is a highly desirable $1 billion bonding bill, ripe for enactment. That’s a prize too valuable to pass up. The 60 percent supermajority that bonding bills require is difficult to obtain — so much so that in three of the last dozen years, the Legislature failed to enact one. Skip a year, and the backlog of needed infrastructure upgrades will grow. The projects will become more costly. An opportunity for bipartisan cooperation will be lost.

And many projects shouldn’t wait. Many towns desperately need the new water treatment plants the bill would fund. Fort Snelling’s new visitor center should be ready for the old fort’s 2020 bicentennial. The Science Museum needs help correcting chronic water seepage. And the people at Dorothy Day deserve the second chance its new facility can provide. We’re rooting for a special session before Christmas.